Rod-Fishing for Salmon on the Wye

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ROD-FISHING FOR SALMON ON THE WYE

WITH FLY, MINNOW, PRAWN, Etc.

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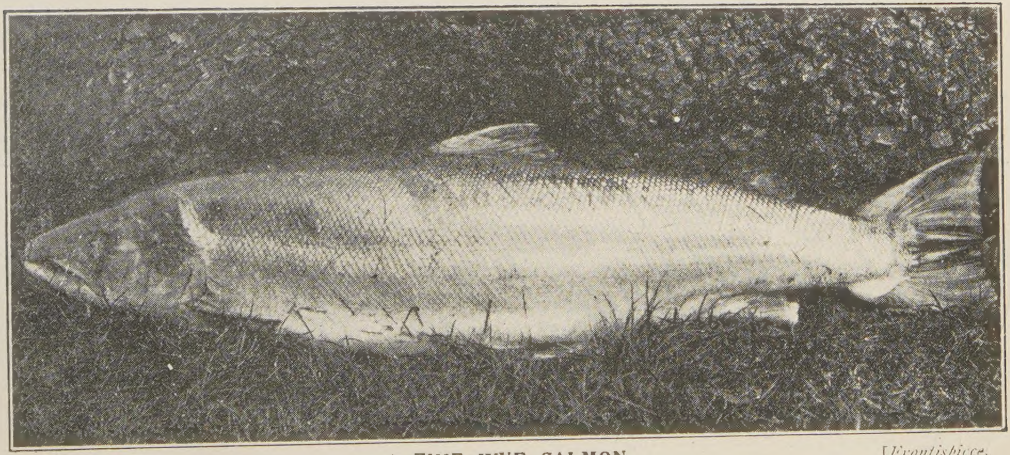

A FINE WYE SALMON. [*Frontispiece.*

Rod-Fishing for Salmon on the Wye

WITH FLY, MINNOW, PRAWN, ETC.

BY

J. ARTHUR HUTTON

AUTHOR OF

"THE REMINISCENCES OF HALSTEN MURI," "SALMON SCALES."
"THE LIFE HISTORY OF WYE SALMON,"
ETC., ETC.

NEW EDITION
WITH AN ENTIRELY NEW APPENDIX BY THE AUTHOR

40 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND
4 FOLDING PLATES

WITHDRAWN
FROM THE
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LONDON
THE FISHING GAZETTE
56/58, WHITCOMB STREET, W.C.2.
1930

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INTRODUCTION

ANGLERS who read this little book by Mr. J. Arthur Hutton will, I feel sure, agree with me that it was a "happy thought" of mine to suggest it to him. Although in the *Fishing Gazette* we have had many a record of the wonderful sport he and his friends have had for years on the Wye near Hereford, and many illustrated and other accounts of his work in studying the life-history of the salmon, especially in the study of salmon scales, yet we had had very little on methods of angling for salmon. But I knew of his lifetime's experience in angling in the United Kingdom and in Norway, and I had the pleasure of fishing for salmon with him on the Wye, and learning most of what I know of spinning for salmon—an art in itself—from him, so I had no fear whatever that salmon anglers would not appreciate his articles—and they did appreciate them.

Among all the series of articles I have published in the *Fishing Gazette* in the last forty years, hardly any have called forth more appreciative references from our readers, especially of course from salmon anglers, than these modest and undogmatic chapters on how he fishes, by Mr. Hutton. My early salmon angling experiences were mainly with anglers who used fly only, and although I published many accounts of fishing with spinning baits, with prawns, and some even with worm, I always had the feeling that the

fly is the only thing. Of course I thought I knew the other and less orthodox methods. Now, when I look back and think of the invitations from old salmon angling friends which I declined because they fished waters requiring the spinning bait and the prawn!—well, I can only quote my experience as a warning to young anglers, and say, Use the fly for preference when the conditions of the water suit it, but never miss a chance to catch a salmon in any other fair angling method. Such chances are not handed out like coughs, colds, and the "flu."

Mr. Hutton deserves the thanks of anglers for giving us his experiences. He is, as I said before, not dogmatic, and I know it is always a pleasure to him to have suggestions from the experience of others, for methods of salmon angling are not the same on all rivers; for instance, the single-hook prawn tackle, used with such success on the Bann and other Irish rivers, and on the Taw and Torridge, is a delicate and fascinating style well worth more attention from English and Scottish anglers.

Mr. Hutton's experiences in improving a salmon river will be found most valuable.

R. B. MARSTON.

Surrey Lodge,
Denmark Hill, S.E. 5.

November 4, 1919.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

Mr. Hutton's most useful book has been out of print for some considerable time, but the demand continues.

I asked Mr. Hutton to revise it, but he preferred to bring it up-to-date by means of an appendix rather than alter the original text.

As it now stands it is a practical exposition of rod fishing for salmon with fly, minnow and prawn, not only for the Wye, but for all rivers of a similar character.

E. W. M.

September, 1930.
56–58, Whitcomb Street,
London, W.C.2.

ROD-FISHING FOR SALMON ON THE WYE.

Chapter I.

General Observations.

It is sometimes a mistake to have a conscience, or, rather, if one has a conscience it is not always wise to make promises. A few months ago our good friend Mr. Marston asked me to write a few articles for the *Fishing Gazette* on salmon-fishing in the Wye—as he put it, "We sometimes get too much of the scientific side of the question, and I know you are not one of those scientific blokes who know nothing of the practical part of it." Well, I may know something about salmon-fishing, but I am now beginning to doubt whether I know enough to justify my trying to redeem that unfortunate promise to write something about catching salmon in the Wye. The longer I live and the more I fish, the more I find there is yet to be learnt—and, alas! life is so short. I don't know who it was who make the remark that no one has any business to write about salmon-fishing until he has caught at least five hundred fish. One might go further and say that one must not write about it unless one has caught at least five hundred salmon with each different method—fly, minnow, prawn, and worm. I am afraid if this were insisted on there would not be many letters written or much literature of any sort about salmon-fishing. I, for one, would have to for ever after hold my peace.

Another reason why I feel rather diffident about redeeming that promise is that my experience of salmon-fishing has been rather limited. I have fished for trout for a good many years, and, curiously enough, my first lesson, and, indeed, most of my trout-fishing, was on the Derbyshire Wye—a fairly liberal education. Judging from my own experience, trout-fishing is a good education for the would-be salmon-fisher. It is easier to make a good trout-fisherman into a salmon-fisherman than the reverse. The great fault of the trout-fisherman when dealing with salmon is that he is inclined to strike too soon. An Irish gillie often used to tell me that it would be better sometimes to shut my eyes, as I often saw the fish coming before he had actually reached the fly or had fairly got it in his mouth. The result was that I struck too soon and pulled the fly away from them, and they rarely come a second time when this has happened. One can hardly be too slow with salmon, and it is not a bad rule—with, of course, exceptions—never to strike (or, rather, to tighten the line) until you feel him or her, as the case may be.

As I said before, my experience with salmon is rather limited, for beyond a fair amount of sea-trout fishing and a much lesser amount of salmon-fishing in Scotland, Ireland, and Norway, I never fished seriously for salmon until I first came to the Herefordshire Wye eleven years ago. Also on this river it is rather a case of "one water," for I have only fished on three other beats on the Wye, besides the length which I and my friends lease at Hampton Bishop, near Hereford. We rented the Holme Lacy water for part of the 1907 season, and I once had one day's fishing at Whitney, and this year I had a couple of days' fishing at Brockweir, which is the lowest beat on the river. Beyond that I have no experience of any other reach on the Wye, and as there are many different fisheries on that river, each of which has its own characteristics, it

would be absurd for me to pretend to advise anyone as to the best methods of catching salmon in the Wye. However, a promise is a promise and must be redeemed, and I can only hope that our experiences during the last eleven years at Hampton Bishop may be of some use to others who fish, or intend to fish, for salmon in that beautiful river.

Leasing a Fishing.

I should like to give a word of warning to anyone intending to lease a beat on the Wye. Although there are close on 120 miles of the river in which salmon are to be found at most times of the year, one can hardly expect that there would be good fishing water throughout the whole of that distance. There are many long reaches of deep, sluggish water which are almost useless, and it by no means follows because a beat is adjacent to a first-class fishery, that good catches can be made there. Also in some cases one side may afford first-class fishing, whereas the other bank is of very little use. Then, again, some lengths may only hold fish in the late autumn, when they are getting coloured and heavy with spawn. The Wye is essentially a spring river, and one ought not to pay a high rent for any beat which does not give good fishing in the earlier months of the year. The reason I mention this is because recently several unfortunate individuals have been induced to pay high rentals for beats which are almost useless.

I should always advise anyone thinking of leasing any water on the Wye to insist on seeing the record of catches for, say, the last five years, and if these particulars are not forthcoming one may be sure it is because they will not justify the rent demanded. It is also a good plan to insist on knowing the amount at which the fishery is assessed for rating purposes by the Board of Conservators. This will give a pretty good idea of the real value of the

fishery: but the actual rental will, of course, be higher if the landlord pays the taxes. The river rate levied by the Conservators amounts to about 4s. to 5s. in the pound, and the local rates will be about 3s. If the services of a keeper are included, this will also mean an extra amount to be added to the rental, but this is well worth paying for, as an experienced man means many more fish at the end of the season. Besides that, the keeper can fish when the lessee is unable to get to his water.

If one wants to have really good fishing one must not forget that first-class spring fishing is limited in quantity, and consequently commands a high rental. There is also the question of accessibility and of living accommodation to be considered, and, further, the character of the water. Good fly water with bank-fishing or easy wading will always command a higher rental than water only suitable for spinning and where boat-fishing is necessary. It is also of very great advantage to have both banks, which, unfortunately, is very exceptional on the Wye.

Number of Rods.

It is also very important to know how many rods a water will carry, for it spoils the pleasure of fishing if one is unable to have a friend or two with one, and it is poor fun if one has to crowd two or three rods on to a water which has barely room for one rod, nor is it quite fair to one's neighbour on the opposite bank. In this connection it should not be forgotten that, generally speaking, when the river is low there is very much less fishing water. For instance, our water will easily carry three or four hard-working rods when the river is high, but as soon as the water gets on the low side there is only room for two rods—and even with not more than two rods on the water it means a certain amount of give and take The highest flood I have

seen registered 13ft. 6in. on our gauge, where the river is rather slow running and about 60 yards wide, and the lowest water we have recorded was 2½in. in 1911.* A few fish have been caught with the water between 3ft. 9in. and 4ft., and also a few with the river between 6in. and 9in.; but although the water is fishable, we never expect any really good fishing until the river gets below 3ft., nor do we hope for very much after it drops below 1ft. 6in. The best of the fishing is between 2ft. 9in. and 1ft. 6in., but as soon as the river gets to 2ft. the catches which are then fishable are not only less in number, but very much reduced in length, so that two rods can easily fish the whole of the water twice in one day. One will fish the top beat in the morning and the other the lower water, and in the afternoon they will exchange beats. Even then, with very clear water and bright weather, it is generally better only to fish in the morning and the evening, and to give the water and the fish a rest in the afternoon. One can easily overfish one's water when it gets low and clear and make the fish so that they will look at nothing.

"Some Fishermen Won't be Told."

A friend of mine once came down to fish one afternoon in May. It was a bright, hot, cloudless, broiling day, and the water was low and clear (gauge 1ft. 3in.), and it was essentially a day for fly and not for minnow. I took him up to the Carrots Pool, reserving the better fly water for the evening. I generally interfere as little as possible with other fishermen, and have learnt by experience

* Our gauge registers about 6 inches higher than the Hereford gauge, on which zero is supposed to represent the height when the water is at the lowest summer level, therefore 2½in. would be equal to 3½in. *below* the Hereford zero.

A GOOD SPRING CATCH ON THE WYE FOR TWO RODS.

Nine fish, 92½lb.; average, 21½lb.; largest, 28½lb.

never to offer advice unless it is asked for. For three hours I sat in the shade watching him tease the unfortunate fish, which were "showing" in considerable numbers. He tried minnows and spoons and all sorts of other implements, and, if I remember rightly, ended up with a large wagtail. At five o'clock I suggested we should adjourn to our cottage, which was less than half a mile away, for a cup of tea. No; he did not want any tea. I then suggested that he might like a rest. No; he did not want a rest either. I then told him that if he did not want a rest at any rate the fish did, and finally I persuaded him to come back for tea. Afterwards I told him that the conditions were very much more favourable than they had been in the afternoon, and that I was sure if he would come to the lower water he would be almost certain to catch a fish, provided, of course, that he would fish a fly instead of a minnow. Not a bit of it; he was determined to go back to the Carrots and tease those poor fish again. I did not feel I could stand watching him any longer, so I left him to his own devices and went off with my fly-rod to the lower pools which I had saved up for his evening fishing. Needless to say, he caught nothing, and I came back with two small fish, one of 12½lb., caught in the Roaring Rocks with a No. 3 double-hook Thunder and Lightning, and the other 8½lb. from the Lower Red Bank, and caught with a very small Lemon Grey (No. 5 double hook). The reason I used a smaller fly in the latter pool was because it is a smooth glide and comparatively shallow — that is, for our water—being only about 3ft. to 6ft. deep. It also has a bright gravel bottom, which reflects a good deal of light. I think under these conditions it is advisable to use a much smaller fly or minnow than one would use in a deeper pool with a dark bottom, or where there is rushing broken water.

THE GORSE BUSH STREAM ON THE WYE, HAMPTON BISHOP.

Now if he had only been willing to take my advice there is every probability that my friend would have caught one, if not both, of these fish; but as my dear old Norwegian gillie and friend said to me once, "Some English people won't be told." It was that afternoon that brought home to me what the gillie has to suffer when he is sent out with an inexperienced angler, and especially when, as is often the case, "he won't be told." I generally find the less a man knows about fishing the less he is willing to be told. Personally, if I am put on a strange water I humble myself in the dust, and put myself entirely in the hands of the gillie. I put on the fly or minnow he recommends, and fish, or try to fish, where and as he wants me to do. It at any rate puts one on good terms with him, and you place yourself in the way of learning all he has to teach, whereas if you give yourself lordly airs or pretend to be one of the "know-alls," more likely than not he will retire into his shell and you miss an opportunity of learning something. At any rate he knows, or ought to know, the water much better than you do, and this is one of the most important factors in salmon-fishing. The catching of salmon is not so much a matter of skill as of experience. Although this is our eleventh season at Hampton Bishop, and although I personally have put in a good deal of time there, I feel that I am only just beginning to "know" the water. My friend Ernest Crosfield, to whom as a fisherman I take my hat off every time, gave me some amusing verses illustrating all this:—

He that knows not and knows not that he knows not,
Is a fool.
Shun him.

He that knows not and knows that he knows not,
Is ignorant.
Teach him.

He that knows and knows not that he knows,
Is asleep.
Wake him.

He that knows and knows that he knows,
Is a wise man.
Follow him.

(*Author unknown.*)

Salmon-fishing may be divided into four branches —fly, minnow, prawn, and worm—and I think the first is the easiest and the others more difficult in the order mentioned. It is very curious what a strong prejudice there is against any other method than fly-fishing, partly due to ignorance, but also partly to jealousy. Good bait-fishers are not common, and I think it is no exaggeration to say that there are at least ten first-class fly-fishermen for every expert with the spinning rod. I will humbly confess that at one time I was as much prejudiced against bait-fishing as anyone, and I remember being quite annoyed with my friend Behrens catching a salmon on the charming little Slaney river with a minnow, when we could do nothing with the fly. I believe I made the remark that I would sooner catch no salmon at all than catch them with "a bit of tin." I will own up; it was just envy, for at that time I knew nothing about spinning. I did, however, get the laugh of him the next day. He was doing a bit of swanking, and was showing us how far he could cast. He made a mighty effort and threw his minnow right across the river—it was not very wide there—and it lodged in the branches of a tree on the opposite bank. We had to send dear old "Moike" across in the boat, and he had to climb the tree to dislodge the minnow, which was pretty firmly fastened. Those who have fished at Ballycarney will remember Mike—a typical, shabby-looking Irish gillie, and, like most Irishmen, with charming manners, and

also a very good fisherman. He taught me how to shoot one's line, a most valuable lesson which I will allude to later on. There was a pool at the bottom of the water, which was not very good, and as one had to get over some nasty boggy ground to reach it, I often used to send Mike to fish it, but there was always one answer when he returned. "Well, Mike, did you do anything?" "I did not, sir." "Well, did you see any fish?" "Not a ha'porth, your honour." Dear old Mike, he was a good old soul when he kept clear of the whisky. Alas! like many of my old fishing friends, he has joined the majority. I often wonder what there is about fishing which seems to make fishermen, or at any rate most of them, such charming people. It is a great "freemasonry"—more, I think, than any other sport, and as a friend of mine remarked, "No fisherman can be wholly bad."

Chapter II.

Fly-Fishing *versus* Spinning.

Now I should like to argue this question of bait-fishing seriously. I take it that when we go salmon-fishing our business is to catch fish. Therefore, if the conditions render it impossible to get them with the fly, I think it is ridiculous not to use other methods, which might bring success, so long as they are conducted in a fair and sportsmanlike manner. For instance, at the lower end of the famous Carrots Pool there is a hole about eight feet deep at the top and gradually deepening to about 20ft. Only odd fish have been caught in it with a fly, and certainly not for want of trying, for the capture of a salmon with a fly in this pool is considered by us a feat to be proud of, and is always entered in the "Record Book." It is certainly not a place where one would like to be restricted to fly only, and particularly so in the early spring. Spring fish are fat lazy beggars, and we find they are not inclined to go much out of their way for either fly or bait, and if minnow-fishing was barred our bag would be considerably less. During the last eleven years out of a total of 1,537 fish caught at Hampton Bishop no less than 380 salmon, or nearly quarter of the total, were taken out of the Carrots Hole. Exactly ten of these were caught with the fly, though possibly a few more—but certainly not many—might have been caught with the fly if it had been tried more. To show what can be done in this hole I may mention that on May 8, 1911, Beddington caught four fish, weighing 92¼lb., between ten and eleven o'clock. The

weights were as follows—12lb., 19¼lb., 28lb., and 32¾lb. They were all caught on a 2in. Brown and Gold Devon. Then, again, on March 13, 1913, Behrens beat this record by catching four fish, 96¾lb., as follows—19½lb., 23lb., 24¾lb., and 29½lb. They were all caught between 4.30 p.m. and 5.45 p.m. with a 2½in. Blue and Silver Devon. It is a most interesting but a most difficult pool to fish properly, and it almost always holds fish, but it is one of the most uncertain taking places I know. I remember on one occasion I fished it in the morning without a touch, and Milne was equally unsuccessful in the afternoon. Beddington came down from London the same day and arrived at 5.30 p.m. We got his rod and tackle ready so that he could get off at once, and we arranged that he should fish the Hole, as it was the nearest pool to the house. He came back at 6.45 p.m. with three fish—16lb., 20¾lb., and 27¼lb. It has never been a lucky pool for me, and I have never succeeded in catching four fish out of it at a sitting, but I have been lucky enough to get two "forty-pounders" there. I think it will be generally admitted that it would be folly on our part to bar bait-fishing in that pool, and at the present time it would be criminal to do so, for I think it is now the duty of every fisherman to do what he can to add to the food supply of the country—a nice excuse when one wants a few days' holiday.

We have other pools which run from 8ft. to 12ft. deep, where, in the early months, the fly would be almost useless; but there is another strong argument in favour of bait-fishing, and especially on the Wye. When a big flood comes down that river, and especially below the mouth of the Lugg, it brings with it a large amount of the red soil of the country, and it is so thick that it looks as if you could walk on it. Such a flood may take four or five days or even longer to clear, and it would be impossible for fish lying in deep water even to see

the fly, and the only chance is a minnow. If one is to wait until the water is clear enough for a fly, another flood may come down and away all the fish go, and it may be days or even weeks before one gets another chance. At the moment of writing I am watching a six-foot flood running down, which came two days ago, and I doubt if she will fish to-morrow. This is the fifteenth flood in four weeks, and during the whole of that time the water has never been clear enough for the minnow, let alone the fly. I remember February, 1910, to my sorrow. We had no less than eight big floods in that month, and only on two days was the water below three feet, and consequently not a single fish was caught.

I consider it simply stupid to forbid bait-fishing in the manner in which it is done on some waters. I am as keen about fly-fishing as anybody. I always take my fly-rod out if there is half a chance, and there is nothing I dislike more than having to go back to the minnow once I have fairly started fly-fishing. If you have bright, clear water with good streams, which are not too deep, the fly is probably the most effective method to use. I hardly ever used a minnow in those crystal clear waters of Norway, and the only salmon I ever caught in any river in that country with anything but a fly was caught with a prawn, and a red ugly devil he was. I have, of course, caught them trolling in lakes in Norway, but that is another story.

I have also found that sometimes a salmon will come and look at your fly and will not come again, but will take a minnow. Here are some notes from my diary :—

1910, May 13.—Gauge 1ft. 7in. Rose a fish in Lower Red Bank on Thunder and Lightning. He would not come again, but I hooked him on a Brown and Gold Devon. Lost him when he was played out through hook bending.

1917, April 25.—Gauge 1ft. 7½in. Upper Red Bank, 17¾lb. Rose this fish on big Torrish, tried him with a smaller Torrish, and then with a small Silver Grey and afterwards with the first fly. Then put a 1¾in. Brown and Bright Silver Devon over him, and he took it at once.

Then, again, in May, 1917, I had a young sailor nephew with me, who had never fished for salmon. As he had only a few days' leave it was of no use trying to teach him to fish with a minnow, as the water was on the low side—dropping from 1ft. 10in. to 1ft. 3in.—and he would have spent most of his time fast on the bottom. It is not so easy to fish a minnow in low water. He soon got quite good at casting a fly, and as the water was in perfect fly order he ought to have had a fish or two. May is one of our best fly months, but for some unknown reason during those few days the fish would not look at a fly. During the five days he was with us I and my wife caught twelve fish between us, but every single one was caught with a minnow, and there is a note in our diary, "Why won't the fish look at a fly?"

I think the above goes to show that there are occasions and conditions when one has to use a minnow or other bait or go without fish, but that is no reason for using a spinning rod when they can be caught with the fly. Let us not forget that the salmon that are with us to-day may be in somebody else's water to-morrow, and therefore, if we want to catch salmon, I think it is only reasonable to adopt any sporting method of catching them. Some people say that they don't play so well on the bait as they do on the fly. That is not my experience, and I don't think it takes me any less time to kill a fish with the minnow than with the fly.

Further than that, I consider it is the duty of everyone who has any ambition to become a good salmon fisherman to try and become an adept in every sporting way of catching them. There is no

doubt bait-fishing is much more difficult to learn than fly-fishing. The casting is harder to acquire, to begin with, and besides that one has to learn the bottom of the river as well as the surface, a lesson which is sometimes rather expensive. On one occasion my wife lost two phantoms, traces, and leads in two consecutive casts, so bang went the best part of a sovereign in less than half an hour.

A certain amount of the prejudice against bait-fishing is due to the idea that it disturbs the fish more than fly-fishing. I am inclined to think that too much prawn or worm-fishing will have that effect, but I honestly believe that a good minnow fisherman frightens the fish much less than an equally good fly fisherman. He will always throw his minnow well beyond where the fish lie, though I do not think they mind a splash much, as I have seen salmon take a minnow almost the second it dropped in the water. I must confess I always feel rather ashamed of myself if this happens to me, as it shows I ought to have been casting a longer line. One can easily test the truth of my statement that salmon do not mind a bit of splashing by throwing stones at a fish one can see in the water. As a rule they do not take much notice of one's action, unless you are lucky enough to drop a good large rock almost on the top of his nose. Even then the fish usually soon returns to its resting-place. Then the line used in spinning is, or ought to be, pretty fine, and will hardly show in the water. Therefore, the fish first sees the minnow, and, if he does not take it, the next cast may show him the lead. After that for the next few casts a fine line will pass over his head.

The fly-fisherman, on the other hand, has to use a line which is, compared with a fine spinning line, more like a cart-rope. The fish will probably see the fly for two or three casts and the thick line for another half-dozen casts, and if the angler goes in for spey-casting there will be plenty of splashing

as well. One has only to go and watch a good minnow fisherman, and I think anyone with an open mind will admit that he does not create much disturbance in the water. Anyhow, I have frequently seen fish caught with a fly just behind the minnow, and one occasion I remember well. In April, 1917, I had a touch of lumbago, so I sat on the bank watching Beddington fishing the Farm Pool with a minnow. After finishing the pool he said he would go back and try the Nook, which I had just fished. As I had to wait for him, sooner than sit idle any longer I decided to try a fly for curiosity, and I got a nice fresh fish of 18¼lb., which must certainly have seen his minnow five minutes earlier.

I certainly do not believe in teasing salmon, for I think you can make them so that they will look at nothing, but you can do this just as well with a fly as with a minnow.

To sum it all up, the prejudice against bait-fishing is largely due to ignorance, and perhaps to incompetence. As I once said to a friend who was inveighing loudly against spinning, "Do you know anything about it?" My advice to those who are prejudiced is to do as I did: "Get rid of your prejudice and learn to spin, and you will certainly catch more salmon—which I presume is what you want to do."

WYE SPRING FISH: AN EVENING'S CATCH ON THE CARROTS HOLE.

Four fish, 98½lb. March 25, 1910.

Chapter III.

On Keeping a Fishing Diary.

I suppose every salmon fisher keeps a record of the numbers and weights of the fish he catches. If he does not he ought to. It would be a good thing, and would be invaluable for estimating the value to the country of our salmon fisheries, if everyone who catches salmon, either with rod or net, were compelled to make an official return at the end of the season of all the fish he has caught. Such returns could be treated as confidential, and this would remove any objection there might be to being compelled by law to give these particulars. As it is, we have no statistics to guide us, and we have no facts to prove whether, as is generally supposed, our salmon fisheries are deteriorating, though I am afraid there is little doubt that in most rivers it is so.

To return, however, to the fishing diary. Some anglers will record the name of the pool where they caught their fish, and possibly also the fly or bait which they used, and in most cases there the matter ends. I think it will be found that it will add greatly to the interest of one's fishing, and also be extremely useful for future guidance, if a record is also kept of the conditions of weather and water, and also of the size of the fly or minnow which has been successful.

In our diary we perhaps go to extremes (see folding Plates 1 and 2 in pocket at end of book). A regular record is kept of the height and temperature of the water, the weather conditions, and the height of the barometer, and, of course, the weight of the fish and the pools in which they are caught. We

also record the length, girth, sex, length of head, and whether the fish had sea-lice on it or not, or was fresh-run or stale, and, needless to say, a number of scales are taken from each fish. Many of these particulars, of course, are unnecessary unless one is collecting statistics for scientific purposes. However, it all adds to the interest of fishing, and it is astonishing how closely one can guess the weight of a fish as soon as the length and girth have been measured. We also record the time of the day when the fish was hooked and the fish that are risen or touched or lost. These latter particulars are useful as showing in what pools fish may be expected at certain heights of water.

All these particulars have been worked out statistically, and we have found that *the most important factor* is the height of the water. The first question I ask on arrival at Colcombe is, "What is the height of the gauge?" As I have a long distance to come by train and do not want to waste valuable time in going to Hereford when the conditions are hopeless, the keeper sends me a postcard every day giving me the state and height of the water morning and evening, and, with the past years' experience to guide me, I can form a pretty fair idea of what sort of sport one may expect.

As I said before, we do not expect to catch any fish when the water is thick and muddy, and not very many when the water is either over 3ft. or under 1ft. 6in. We generally find that we get the best sport after a big flood which drops steadily every day, and if the Wye is clear and the Lugg—which joins the Wye at the bottom of our fishing—is coming down thick and red so much the better, though I am afraid that dirty little river is often cursed by the fishermen below us. It, however, cuts both ways, for though our water may fish well a few days sooner than the beats immediately below us, they frequently get a week or a fortnight's

fishing when our water has got too low. This is especially the case in May and June, and frequently in those months only a small portion of the run will reach us.

Given conditions as mentioned above, and with a steadily falling water in March or April, we can expect fresh-run fish every day for a fortnight, or, in exceptionally favourable conditions, for three weeks. Unfortunately it is not often that we are so well treated by Providence, for more often than not just when the water comes right and we are beginning to catch fish, down comes another big flood. There is then nothing else to do but to go home, for it will be at least three or four days, if not longer, before there will be a chance of catching a fish.

Height of Water the Main Factor.

I cannot emphasise too much this question of the height of the water; we find it is *the main factor* in catching salmon, and yet there are many valuable fisheries on which they have not even a gauge. Every flood will or should bring up a run of fresh fish, and as soon as the water reaches a certain level good fishing may be expected. It is also of great importance to know at which height any particular pool will fish best. As every experienced angler knows, some pools are only good in high water, whereas others are useless until the water drops to a certain level. It is therefore evident that by keeping a record of the height of the water and of the fish caught or "met" at each particular height, one can save a lot of time. As soon as one knows the height of the gauge one can decide which pools to go and fish.

For instance, in Tinker's Hole—a high-water catch—fish have been caught with the water over 3ft. 9in., but not a single fish has been caught below 2ft. 3in., and the best height is between 3ft. 3in. and 3ft. 6in. On the other hand, in Lyddiatts—one of

our best low-water fly catches—not a fish has been killed with the water over 2ft. 3in., and they have been caught when the river was below one foot.

I must mention rather a curious occurrence which happened this season. With limited knowledge one is apt to jump to conclusions, which a wider experience will prove to be unsound. After ten years' fishing at Hampton Bishop I thought I knew a good deal, and last year I should have stated with confidence that it was useless to expect fresh-run fish in our water when the gauge fell below one foot. Here are our previous records of the lowest height of water at which fish had been caught with sea-lice on them :—

February ...	1ft. 2½in.	May	1ft. ½in.
March	1ft. 4 in.	June	1ft. 4 in.
April	1ft. 3 in.	July	1ft. 9 in.

We have no record of a fish being caught with sea-lice on it after July, but this may be due to their not living so long in fresh water when the temperature rises above a certain level. Anyhow, the above figures seem pretty conclusive; and now for the upset to one's theories.

Last March was an exceptionally dry month, and it also followed a comparatively dry February, for the only big flood in the latter month was one of 10ft. 6in. on the night of the 10th. There was a small rise to 4ft. on the 22nd, and after that a drought set in, and on March 23 the river was below one foot, or not far from summer-level. My friend Robert Pashley wrote to me that there was a big run of fish coming up the river, so on March 27 I left home by the morning train on the chance of some of them having reached us. I found the gauge at 9in., but I did not waste much time over lunch, and I started fishing soon after 2.30 p.m. I took a fly-rod and also a spinning rod and some prawns with me, as I knew most of the water would

be too dead for the fly at this low level. Here is the result :—

March 27.

Roaring Rocks	19 lb.;	sea lice	Spinning Prawn (small)
Carrots Run...	21½lb.	,,	Black and White, 3/0
,, ...	21½lb.	,,	Spinng. Prawn (medium)

I also rose a fish in the Roaring Rocks on the Black and White and touched another in the Carrots run on the spinning prawn, also two kelts.

March 28.

Roaring Rocks	20¼lb.	fresh run	Black and White, 3/0

I rose another fish on the Black and White in the Lower Red Bank. We had heavy rain that day, and in the afternoon the water came down thick and dirty, and on the following day the river was over 4ft. and very thick, and the fishing was over. It just shows that it does not do to jump to conclusions, and that we have still a lot to learn.

Fish Taking in Rising Water.

In this connection I should like to draw attention to the fact that the general belief that it is useless fishing with rising water is a mistake. I am not alluding to a slow rise after a long period of low water, for on those occasions the fish often take splendidly. I am referring rather to a rise when the water is at a medium height or even high, Here are some entries from our diary :—

1913, March 29.—3ft. previous evening, 3ft. 4in. in morning, 3ft. 9in. in evening. Coloured to thick.
J. A. Hutton, 23lb. Tinker's Hole. Sand-eel (large)
,, 14½lb. ,, ,, ,,
1914, March 31.—2ft. 7in. previous evening, 2ft. 9in. in morning, 3ft. 10in. in evening. Clear to coloured.
Woolliams, 23½lb. Birch Grove. Blue and Silver Devon. 2⅞in.
Woolliams, 17¾lb. Black Hole. Blue and Silver Devon. 2¾in.

R. BEDDINGTON'S RECORD FISH.

Cock, 35lb.; length, 43½ inches; girth, 24½ inches. April, 1917.

1916, April 25.—2ft. 8¼in. previous evening, 3ft. in morning, 3ft. 7in. in evening. Clear.

Mrs. Hutton, 18lb. Carrots Flat. Brown and Gold Phantom. 3in.

J. A. Hutton, 19½lb. Gorse Bush. Bright Gold Devon. 2½in.

J. A. Hutton, 8lb. Nook. Bright Gold Devon. 2½in.

1916, May 13.—2ft. 4¾in. previous evening, 2ft. 9in. in morning, 3ft. 8½in. in evening. Clear to coloured.

H. L. Behrens, 12½lb. Roaring Rocks. Bronze and Silver Devon. 2½in.

H. L. Behrens, 14¾lb. Birch Grove. Bronze and Silver Devon. 2½in.

H. L. Behrens, 26lb. Black Hole. Bronze and Silver Devon. 2½in.

J. A. Hutton lost a fish, Carrots Hole, Brown and Silver Devon, and H. L. Behrens lost one in Roaring Rocks, Bronze and Silver Devon.

I should mention that Behrens thought we were going to have a big flood, and foolishly went off home that evening. On the next day the river began to sink, and I and Mr. Morant and the keeper caught eight fish between us, and on the following day I was lucky enough to get four more.

I think the above conclusively proves that as far as our water is concerned fish can be caught in rising water even when the rise is fairly rapid and on the top of moderately high water.

There is only one way to catch salmon, and that is to keep your line in the water and to give the fish a chance. You will not catch them on dry land. My wife once asked me how it was I caught more fish than she did. I replied, "For one thing, I know a little more about it, but the principal reason is because my line is in the water longer than yours." "Yes," she said, "that may be so,

but I can't understand how you keep on casting and casting all day long. Do you really expect to get a fish every cast?" "No, I don't expect, but I hope, and if I did not hope I could not do it." I must confess I am not a very good trier when I feel it is hopeless, but if the fish are there and the water is clear enough for them to see your fly or bait, I will stick it with anyone. There is one bad habit the early-running fish have in the Wye, or, at any rate, in our water: they so seldom show themselves. Sometimes on a cold day in February or March it is very difficult to keep on casting when you never see a fish all day unless you happen to catch one. I always say you want three virtues to fish in the early spring at Hampton Bishop—"Faith" that they are there, for you never see one move, and if you do it is almost sure to be a kelt; "Hope" that they will take you; and "Perseverance" to keep on lathering away.

Before I finish with the diary I should mention that we also keep a record of the number of kelts which we get hold of, and this has brought out rather an interesting fact—namely, that the kelts are getting earlier in their habits. Formerly March and April were our great kelt months, and most of those we got in February were still very much discoloured. Now we get most of our kelts in February and March and very few in April, and it is quite the exception, even in February, to find a kelt which is at all discoloured. Most of them are quite bright and silvery, and their gills are brilliant scarlet. In other words, they are "well mended" and ready for salt water. It is rather remarkable that during the last eleven years we have only caught two cock kelts, or "kippers," as they call them in Scotland. This is probably due to the fact that the mortality after spawning is so heavy amongst the male fish, and I have often noticed that almost all the dead salmon one finds along the banks when spring-fishing are cock fish.

FISH CAUGHT IN EACH MONTH—10 YEARS, 1908-1917.

	Numbers.			Percentage caught in each month.			Percentage with Fly.
	Bait.	Fly.	Total.	Bait.	Fly.	Total.	
February ...	71	1	72	7	—	5	1½
March ...	243	21	264	24	5	18	8
April	358	60	418	36	14	29	14½
May	210	66	276	21	15	19	24
June	39	98	137	4	22½	10	71½
July	9	17	26	1	4	2	65½
August ...	8	20	28	1	4½	2	71½
September .	33	113	146	3	26	10	77½
October ...	30	39	69	3	9	5	56½
Total ...	1,001	435	1,436	100	100	100	30½

In the above table it will be seen that the total catch during the ten years 1908-1917 amounted to 1,436 fish, or an average of nearly 144 fish per annum. April, as, I believe, is the case with most spring rivers, is easily the best month with nearly a third of the total catch. On the upper waters, and I think on some of the lower beats, May and June are generally better than April, but, of course, everything depends on the height of the water. Our best catch in April was in 1916, when we got 103 fish, and in 1910 we had only eight. Salmon-fishing is always a great lottery, and still more so if one leases a beat for a month only. There may be nothing but floods or there may be a drought. There is not much to choose between March and May, except that the weather is generally more

genial in the latter month. Our best and worst catches in these months are as follows :—

March.—Fifty-four in 1910 and one in 1909.
May.—Ninety-three in 1913 and two in 1912.

September comes next with an average of nearly fifteen fish, but one must not forget that the fish then run much smaller and are beginning to get coloured. February and October are about the same in numbers, but there is no comparison in the quality of the fish. One February salmon is worth a dozen October fish. I think myself on a river like the Wye, where one can have such good fishing in the spring, one ought not to be allowed to fish in October. The fish caught then, and especially the hen fish, are hardly worth eating, and every one of them is an almost certain spawner. If I were Emperor of Persia I should refuse absolutely to allow any extension of the season at the back-end, and some of the rivers would be closed a great deal earlier than they are now. There is a great deal more reason for opening the season on January 1 than allowing it to extend into November. I am glad to say that on the Wye the season ends on October 15, which is a good deal earlier than on most English rivers.

I have given the numbers caught with bait and fly separately for each month, and it will be seen that as the season advances a larger proportion are caught with the fly. In February we have only one solitary instance of a fish being caught with fly—namely, in 1913—and that is not for want of trying. It is not often one gets the water low enough for fly in that month, though I believe in the upper waters fish can be caught with fly in February, but our beat cannot be called first-class fly water.

It will be noticed that after May nearly three-quarters of the fish are caught with the fly. I personally very seldom trouble to take my spinning rod out after the middle of May, for from then

onwards the fly will beat the minnow every time. It is very curious that in September and October the fish will hardly look at a minnow.

The two months that puzzle me are July and August. We may get the river in good fishing order, and there may be plenty of fish about, but for some reason or other they will look at nothing—fly, minnow, prawn, or worm. I think that on the Wye it is probably due to the increased temperature of the water. The average temperature at Hampton Bishop during the last ten years was as follows:—February, 40½deg.; March, 42½deg.; April, 48½deg.; May, 56deg.; June, 62deg.; July, 64deg.; August, 63deg.; September, 58½deg.; and October, 53deg. It has been my experience on most rivers I have fished that July and August are not good fishing months for salmon, yet curiously enough when September comes in they will take as keenly as they do in the spring. It is astonishing how well they do take in the first three months of the season. Of course, we have one or two bad-taking pools—for example, the Carrots Hole and the Roaring Rocks, which are both pretty deep; but on most of the other pools, if we can only spot a fish in the spring, we look on it as almost a certainty; the difficulty is to find them. I do not say we shall always land one, but if I saw a fish move in, say, the Lower or Upper Red Banks, or in the Black Hole or the Nook, I would feel all but certain of getting an offer from it.

To show how well fresh-run spring fish take, I may mention that on April 7, 1913, gauge 2ft. 3¾in. to 2ft. 2¾in., very few fish were seen, and three rods caught ten fish, weighing 199¾lb., and every single fish which "offered" was landed. On the following day the gauge was 2ft. 1¾in. to 2ft. ¾in., and again very few fish were seen, but ten salmon, weighing 213½lb., were landed, and these were all that either ran at the bait or rose to the fly. On the next day the water was 2ft. to 1ft. 11½in., and

seven more fish, weighing 173½lb., were caught. Again very few fish were seen, but on this day a fish was hooked and lost. Here we have a record of twenty-eight fish being hooked in three consecutive days, of which twenty-seven were landed, and no other fish were risen or touched.

Then again on March 10, 1916, the gauge was 2ft. 2½in. to 2ft. 3½in. Not a single fish was seen, but Behrens and I landed six fish, weighing 124¼lb., and these were all the offers we got. Of course, one must not forget that most of these fish were caught on the minnow, and for some reason I cannot explain one loses far more fish on the fly than on the bait—the prawn only excepted.

We had, however, an extraordinary record with the fly in September, 1917. In the eleven days when fly-fishing was possible, thirty-four salmon were risen, and only three failed to hook themselves, and of the remaining thirty-one fish twenty-nine were landed, and only two were lost. On the 29th I was quite annoyed to have to record in the diary that I had risen a fish and so spoilt my record for the week of nine fish risen and nine fish landed.

Weight of Fish.

Before leaving the question of the months in which the fish are caught I must say a word about the weights of the fish. The average weight for the ten years, including the few grilse we catch, is almost exactly 16¾lb. In 1914 we had the extraordinary average for the whole season of 22¼lb., but this was due to the failure of the run of small spring and summer fish, for only ten fish were caught after April. The Wye is noted for its big fish, but they are generally caught in the earlier months, as will be seen from the following figures from our diary, giving the average weight for each month separately :—

Feb.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.
20·6	20·3	19·4	15·5	12·0	10·3	11·8	11·6	11·9

The best of the fishing in our water is over by the middle of May, and after that one does not expect anything wonderful. During the ten years we have caught four fish of 40lb. and over (42lb., 44lb., 44¾lb., and 45¾lb.), six from 35lb. to 40lb., and twenty-four fish from 30lb. to 35lb., or altogether thirty-four fish of 30lb. and over. Six of these were caught in May and twenty-eight in February, March, and April. Only three were caught on the fly, two of 30lb. each, and one of 31 lb.

There is no doubt that one of the great fascinations of spring fishing on a river like the Wye is the probability of catching a big fish and the possibility of the next being a real monster, a forty or even a fifty pounder. Then, again, the average size is so big. I am not exaggerating when I say that in the early months we look on anything under 20lb. as a small fish. Nothing under 30lb. is considered worth mentioning in the "Record Book," though, of course, anything over 25lb. is a big salmon.

The worst of fishing like this is that it rather spoils one, and it is difficult later on to put one's whole heart into it, and to keep on "lathering away" for small fish, and especially so in September, when the fish are beginning to get coloured and heavy with spawn. As for October, I almost feel ashamed of catching salmon in that month. In the summer and autumn I do, however, try to make it more of a sporting proposition by using lighter tackle. As a rule, as soon as the first half of May has gone out comes my 14ft. fly-rod, and the 17ft. rod is put back in its case until next season. Luckily we have little long casting on our water, and with a small rod and light tackle, what otherwise might be a toil becomes a pleasure. It is certainly no amusement to me to fish with a heavy rod, and a line like a cart-rope, for small fish. Fishing then ceases to be a sport, but is almost murder, for with heavy tackle it does not usually

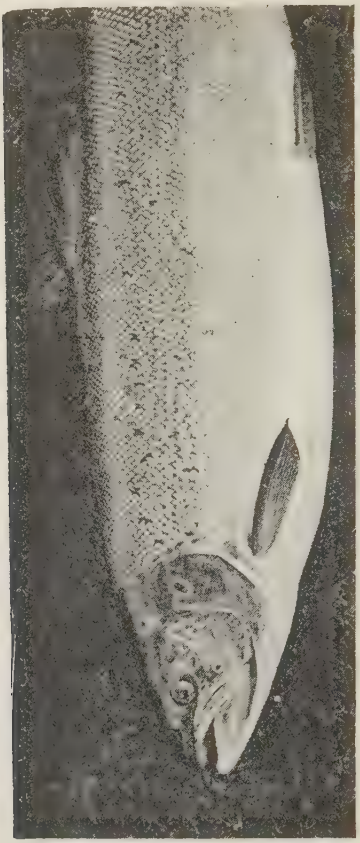
take very long to haul out a small fish in the autumn. But do not make any mistake about it,

A GOOD SPRING CATCH.
Ten fish, 212lb.

a small Wye spring fish of 12lb. or 14lb. in April or May will often frighten one. Some of the hardest fights I have had have been with fish of this sort.

You never know what they will do next, and they may often run out 50 or 60 yards of line before you can get on terms with them. Frequently I have seen my fish jump out twenty or thirty yards above me upstream when the line from the top of the rod was still pointing downstream. Those are the times one gets broken, because then the fish is not pulling against the point of the rod, but against the belly of line which is "drowned" in the water: but I will have something more to say about this later.

The Upper Red Bank is a pool where I always feel nervous. It is a new pool which we practically made ourselves, and in which only one fish was caught prior to 1915, when we completed our engineering operations. These involved moving over thirty big boat-loads of stone, in cutting a new channel through some ridges of rock, and in building a "croy." In 1916 we caught fifteen fish out of this pool, which previously was practically useless water. A strong stream runs right under the bank from which we fish, and if you are lucky enough to get hold of a lively beggar you never know where you will land him; it may be close to where he was hooked, or it may be quarter of a mile down the river. It is an awkward pool to fish, for you have to cast left-handed from a ledge of rock about 6ft. above the water, with a high bank and some nasty trees close behind you. When you do hook a fish you have to get down as quickly as you can over a couple of planks and round a nasty corner, otherwise you may be cut on the sharp edge of a rocky ledge under the water by which the fish lie. I shall never forget one occasion when I persuaded my wife to come and see me fish the Upper Red Bank. It was on April 26, 1916, and as it was a fine warm day we arranged to meet there for lunch. I told her if I hooked a fish she must get out of the way, for the passage along which one had to go was not very wide. The water was fairly



SMALL SUMMER FISH—SEPTEMBER, 1917.

Hen, 12¼lb.

high, 2ft. 10in., and still coloured, so fly was out of the question. I put up one of Hatton's excellent 2½in. Brown and Gold light Devons, and with the second cast I hooked a lively 13lb. small springer. As soon as it felt the hook away it went downstream as hard as it could go. Charlie, the under-keeper, who is a bit of a humorist, called out to my wife, "Make way for the express!" and it did not take me very long to get over the planks, round the corner, and down a steep bank to the level of the water. Even then it did not stop, and away I went as fast as I could run, encumbered as I was with wading trousers, and eventually got on terms with the little devil about 300 yards below where I hooked it; but the fight was then over and Charlie soon had the gaff in her, for it proved to be a hen fish straight up from the sea and covered with sea-lice. My wife said it was the funniest sight in the world to see me running along in my waders, Charlie after me brandishing the gaff, followed by Chubby, our housekeeper's little fox-terrier, barking like mad. I followed this up by catching two more fish in the same pool, 19¾lb. and 21 lb., but they were more stately in their play and took longer to kill, and I ended up the day with a 27-pounder from the Carrots Hole. No, the Wye small springer is not to be despised.

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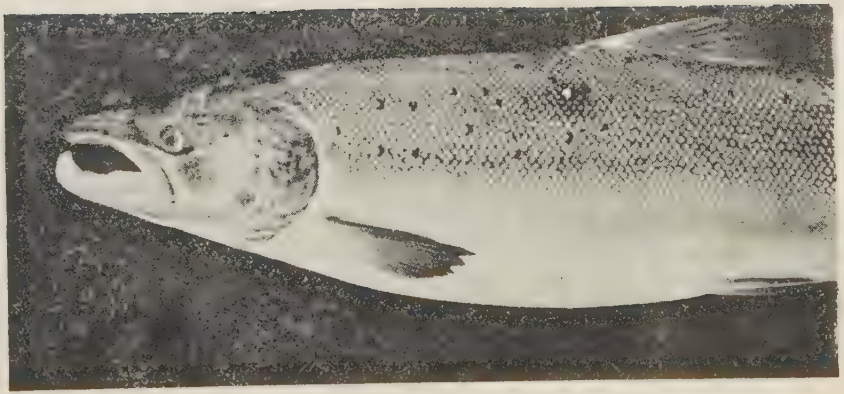


SMALL SUMMER FISH—SEPTEMBER, 1917.

Cock, 10¼lb.

Chapter IV.

Height of Water.

I stated before that in our experience the height of the water is the most important factor in successful salmon-fishing, and I do not think this is sufficiently realised by most anglers. The great thing is to know in which pools, and also in which part of each pool, to fish at any particular height. Generally speaking, we find that in a typical pool, with a strong stream running into it, in high water one will expect to "meet" a fish more towards the lower end of the pool, and that it is not until the water gets low and the temperature rises that one will find them right up in the head of the stream. I have no doubt that when the water is high the force of the current is too strong to enable them to lie comfortably in the upper part of the pool. It is the acquiring of all this experience that constitutes knowing a water, and it is very much more interesting to learn it all for oneself by experience, than to have to depend on the gillie, as so many anglers do. It is of particular importance at the present time, when so many keepers and gillies have been drafted into the Army—alas! some of them never to return. Unfortunately, the learning of a water takes a long time, and especially so if one fishes with bait as well as with fly; in fact, in some cases it may take the best part of a lifetime to learn a water thoroughly well. I know that I am picking up something new every year about our water. For instance, on April 6, 1918, I caught a beautiful fish of 24lb. where no fish had ever been hooked

before, though my wife had once risen a fish in this spot, but that was when the water was much lower.

I at any rate try to make things easy for my partners and our guests by keeping pretty elaborate statistics, and they have only got to refer to our fishing diary to see where most of the fish have been killed at any particular height of water. In the same way, as we keep a record of the pattern of the fly or minnow used, and, still more important, of its size, it is easy to form an idea of what fly or bait to put on when the gauge registers, say, 2ft.

For instance, at this height or, rather, between 2ft. and down to 1ft. 9in., 264 fish have been caught in nineteen different catches, and the six best pools with the number of fish caught in each are as follows:—Carrots Hole, 74; Roaring Rocks, 48; Lower Red Bank, 39; Carrots Flat and Run, 27; Black Hole, 22; and Gorse Bush, 10. Or between 1ft. 6in. and 1ft. 3in., a height at which the fly will beat the minnow, 164 fish have been caught in fifteen different catches, and the six best pools are the following:—Lower Red Bank, 44; Carrots Hole, 43; Roaring Rocks, 23; Black Hole, 20; Lugg's Mouth, 6; and Lyddiatt's, 4. It will be noticed that the Lower Red Bank, our best fly catch, now beats the famous Carrots Hole.

I also give a table showing the number of fish caught, lost, and risen, or touched with fly or bait, at each different height.

It will be noticed that the range for the bait is from 4ft. down to 1ft., or, rather, from 4ft. to 3ft. 9in. down to 12in. to 9in., and no fish have been caught with bait at 9in. or below. The best height is, however, from 2ft. 9in. down to 1ft. 9in., for altogether 1,097 fish, or about three-quarters of the total, have been met at this height. After the water gets below 1ft. 9in. not many fish can be expected with the bait, and most of the fish which have been caught or met with the bait in low water were attracted by the prawn or worm, which, as a

HEIGHT OF WATER.

FISH CAUGHT, RISEN OR TOUCHED, AND LOST, 10 YEARS, 1908–1917.

Water below—	Numbers.			Percentages.		
	Bait.	Fly.	Total.	Bait.	Fly.	Total.
4ft. 0in. ...	13	—	13	0·9	—	0·6
3 „ 9 „ ...	18	—	18	1·2	—	0·8
3 „ 6 „ ...	61	—	61	4·1	—	2·7
3 „ 3 „ ...	79	—	79	5·4	—	3·4
3 „ 0 „ ...	126	—	126	8·6	—	5·5
2 „ 9 „ ...	162	12	174	11·0	1·4	7·5
2 „ 6 „ ...	217	50	267	14·8	5·9	11·5
2 „ 3 „ ...	220	122	342	15·0	14·4	14·8
2 „ 0 „ ...	225	156	381	15·3	18·5	16·4
1 „ 9 „ ...	147	205	352	10·0	24·2	15·2
1 „ 6 „ ...	109	170	279	7·4	20·1	12·0
1 „ 3 „ ...	67	98	165	4·5	11·6	7·1
1 „ 0 „ ...	26	32	58	1·8	3·8	2·5
9 „ ...	—	1	1	—	0·1	—
Total	1,470	846	2,316	100 0	100 0	100·0
Of which were landed—						
Numbers ..	1,000	436	1,436			
Percentage	68	51½	62			

rule, we only use when the conditions are getting hopeless for fly or minnow.

With the fly the conditions are quite different. Not a single fish has been caught or risen with the fly with the gauge over 2ft. 9in., and it is really almost waste of time taking one's fly-rod out until the water drops below 2ft. 6in. As soon as the gauge

gets down to 1ft. 9in. the fly will beat the minnow, and out of a total of 846 offers to the fly, 653, or 77 per cent., have occurred with the gauge between 2ft. 3in. and 1ft.

The table also shows that out of 1,470 fish which ran at the bait, 1,000, or 68 per cent., were landed, whereas 436 fish were landed with the fly from 846 rises, or 51½ per cent. In other words, we expect to land every other fish which rises to the fly, and two out of every three which run at the bait.

Time of Day.

I mentioned that we also kept a record of the time when each fish was hooked, but this only applies to fish which are actually landed, and does not include fish which were lost, risen, or touched, nor have the figures been worked out separately for fly or bait.

During the ten seasons, out of a total of 1,400 fish (the time was not recorded in thirty-six instances), only six have been caught before 8 a.m. Perhaps we are too lazy to get up early, but on the few occasions on which I have fished before breakfast I have never caught a single fish. Also only seven fish have been caught after 8 p.m., which is, perhaps, not surprising, for, as far as my limited experience goes, salmon are not like trout, and do not take well in the dusk.

Between eight in the morning and eight in the evening the best hour is from eleven to twelve o'clock. I should mention that during the last three years "new" time is corrected to old time; in other words, the salmon is supposed to go by the sun, and not by the clock. In that hour, 198 fish have been caught, and out of the 1,400, 546, or nearly 40 per cent., were hooked between ten and one o'clock. The best time in the afternoon is between three and six o'clock, when 398 fish were caught, or about 28 per cent. This seems to show

that the morning is distinctly better than the afternoon, though the possible explanation is that one is fresher, and consequently fishes better and more persistently in the morning than later in the day. Further than that, in the afternoon one is generally fishing a beat which has already been fished, and possibly the taking fish are already on the bank. There is probably something in this, though frequently, when I have been fishing our lowest beat, on returning for lunch I have caught one or two fish in the Roaring Rocks, which I had already fished blank on my way down. I, however, always fancy the Roaring Rocks between twelve and one o'clock, for the sun is then shining directly up the pool, but this again may be one of those deductions which are based on insufficient experience.

Curiously enough, the worst time of the day is between one and two o'clock, but the probable explanation is that this is the luncheon hour, or that one is then going off to one's afternoon beat, for we generally change beats at one o'clock. I always think that that hour and about six to eight o'clock in the evening are the most interesting periods of the day, for you then meet your friends and find out what they have done.

Weather and Temperature of Water.

As I mentioned before, we keep a continuous record of the temperature of the water, which is taken first thing every morning, but so far I have not been able to trace any connection between the temperature and the fish taking well or otherwise. Our records run from a minimum of 32deg. to a maximum of 73deg. In most years we have recorded over 70deg., and occasionally for days together. One wonders how fish can survive such a temperature, which is almost that of a tepid bath. We have caught fish at all temperatures from 34deg. up to 72deg., though most of our salmon have been

A GOOD DAY'S CATCH FOR ONE ROD, APRIL 4, 1917.

Six Fish, weighing 126½lb.: namely, 16½lb., 18½lb., 21¼lb., 21½lb., 23½lb., and 24½lb.

caught with the thermometer between 42deg. and 62deg. inclusive.

In the same way, our records of the weather do not seem to indicate that this has much effect on the catching of fish. We have caught them in quantities in all sorts and conditions of weather, from blazing sunshine to hard frost, when one had to keep putting one's rod in the water to melt the ice which kept forming on the rings. One of the most successful days I had this season was on April 21. We had a strong north wind, and it was snowing hard and most bitterly cold; and the Carrots, where I started fishing, is absolutely open to a northerly wind. At ten o'clock I was fortunate —or shall I say unfortunate?—enough to hook one of those fish which will not come into the gaff. It was not a large fish, only 16¾lb., but it must have taken me fully a quarter of an hour to kill. By that time my fingers were like ice, and I had no feeling left in my arms, and I was simply aching with cold. I had to retire to a sheltered lane and run up and down for a quarter of an hour to get warm enough to fish again. At 10.30 I hooked another fish of 23¼lb., but he was soon on the bank, and at 10.45 I got another of 19lb. I could then stand the cold no longer and made off for a more sheltered pool.

As an example of fish being caught under very different conditions I may mention that the day on which I was lucky enough to catch my first forty-pounder—as a matter of fact he was 44lb.—was apparently a hopeless fishing day. The water was clear, there was not a cloud in the sky, and it was broiling hot.

The conclusion we have come to is that temperature of water, height of barometer, state of the weather, etc., matter comparatively little. The one thing that really matters is the height of the water, and if there are fresh-run fish about and the water is at a good fishing level that is all they care about.

I am sorry to say that I am also beginning to think that the pattern of the fly or the variety of minnow also matter very little, but the size matters a good

ALONE SHE DID IT!
Four fish, 80lb.; largest, 29lb

deal. It certainly takes away some of the pleasure in fishing, for it destroys the idea that if one could only find the "right poison" one might catch tons of fish.

I must, however, make it perfectly clear that these remarks apply solely to spring fishing and to fresh-run fish which will take almost anything if it is presented to them in the right way. It is the man behind the rod who matters most, and not the pattern of the fly or minnow which he is using.

Ours is, of course, essentially a spring catch, and summer fishing is quite another question. I do not know enough about summer fishing to justify my writing about it, and I often say if someone will teach me how to catch summer fish I will willingly give him a hundred pounds.

Chapter V.

Fly-Fishing.

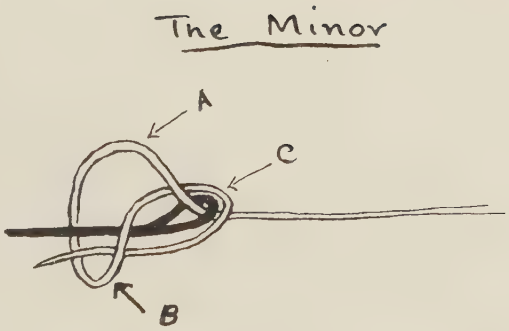
In dealing with fly-fishing, I do not propose to give any instructions as to casting. It would be rather presumptuous on my part, and, besides that, one can learn much more from a friend than from any written instructions. I use three fly-rods, and in February and March, and sometimes in April, I use a 16ft. Grant's vibration rod, which was left to me by a dear old friend who went down "with flags flying." Some months before he died he insisted on my taking it, and as he said, "You will sometimes think of me, old chap, and of our friendship, when you use it." It is a powerful rod, the right weapon to fight a strong head wind, and just the rod for spey-casting, at which I am sorry to confess I am not an expert. In April an old favourite comes out of its case, one of Hardy's 16ft. 6in. split-cane rods. It may be prejudice on my part, but I would always sooner play a fish on a split-cane than a greenheart rod. There is more give and take about it, and I think one has more delicacy of touch with it, and can instinctively feel when a fish is going to make a run and when one has to look out for squalls. Where, however, the pliancy of a split-cane is most useful is when one has a fish on a short line at the moment of gaffing. If it should make a sudden plunge, a split-cane rod will give in a way no greenheart rod can do, and may save one a breakage. I do not think there is anything more exasperating than getting broken; one feels it is one's own fault—unless, of course, the

hook breaks, which no one can help. I shall never forget one fish which I hooked when I was wading, not a large fish, if I remember rightly it was about 12lb. The water was too shallow to bring him into the bank, so I had to gaff him myself. Do what I would I could not get that fish to come within gaffing distance. He seemed to have eyes in his tail and all over his body, for whenever I shortened the line and got within gaffing distance, off he went again. Finally, I got him above me, and as I was stalking up to him from behind, he must have seen me with one of the tail-eyes, and he bolted down-stream close to me, and the rod was bent double. Nothing but a split-cane would have stood such treatment, but after the fish was finally landed the rod was as straight as ever.

My other fly-rod is a 14ft. Hardy's split-cane, and this usually appears on the scene about the middle of May, or even earlier if the water gets low, and then salmon-fishing becomes more of an art than in the earlier part of the year. Personally, I would sooner have the water on the low than on the high side. There is then more room for skill and less of the "chuck and chance it" business.

I use only Hardy's fly-reels. Of course, there are other good reels, but I believe in sticking to a good thing when you have found it, and the adjustable brake and the revolving plate, which enables one to check the run of a fish, are most useful. The lines, of course, must be adjusted to the weight of the rod. I generally use a twisted gut collar 1½ yards in length, which acts as a taper from the line to the cast, which is also 1½ yards long.

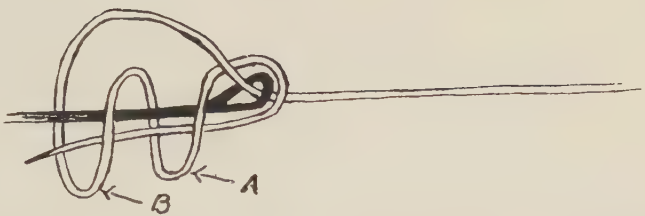
Now as regards flies I hardly know what to say. My experience is so limited that I do not like to appear to lay down the law about this much-debated question of pattern. I can only give the results of our experience at Hampton Bishop, and, as I said before, in the spring the pattern does not seem to matter very much if at all, but the size is most



Thread the gut upwards through the eye and pass the end round the back of the shank, under, and round over the top of the shank, through the loop *A*, then round the eye and *over* the cast, and through loop *B*. Then draw it tight, but be careful that loop *C* is close to the front of the eye of the hook, and that it does not slip over and behind it.

KNOT FOR ATTACHING GUT TO EYED-HOOKS.

The Major



Commence the knot as in the Minor, but pass the gut twice round the shank, and, after bringing the end round the eye and *over* the cast, pass it through the two loops *A* and *B*. To tighten the knot pull the loop *B*, which tightens loop *A*, and then tighten loop *B* by pulling the cast. Both these knots are easily undone by pushing the cast upwards through the eye.

KNOT FOR ATTACHING GUT TO EYED-HOOKS.

important. We have caught fish with flies of all sizes from a 3in. White-Winged Akroyd down to No. 9 double hook. As a rule we always use double hooks in the small sizes, say anything under 1/0 or 1, but below this latter size I should go straight away to a No. 3 double hook, which, I think, would have about the same appearance in size as a No. 2 single hook.

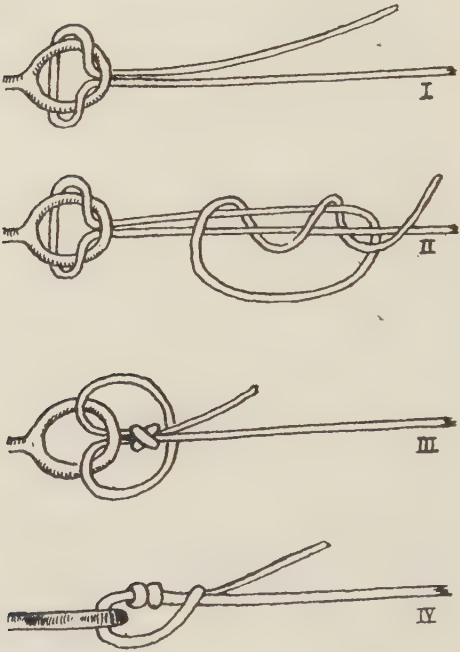
As regards that 3in. Akroyd, it was given to me by my friend Pryce-Tannatt, whose flies are real works of art. He and Ernest Crosfield are the two best amateur fly-tiers I have met, and I am glad to say that both of them put very little feather in the wings of their flies. I am sure most of the shop flies are overdressed, and especially in the wing. I remember a member of the Fly Fishers' Club showing me with much pride some flies he had dressed there one afternoon. I asked him if he wanted my honest opinion about them, and when he replied in the affirmative, I told him that I personally could dress two flies with the materials he used for making one. If many of the members use the same amount of feathers as he does, I am afraid the valuable stock provided by the club will not last very long.

To come back again to that 3in. Akroyd, which is only one of the many flies my friend has given me. This particular present was made to enable me to catch "one of the monsters that lurk in the dark depths of the Carrots Hole." The only fish I caught with it was in that dread spot, a hen fish of 23½lb., on April 11, 1916, and where the fish came to the fly the water must have been over 15ft. deep. I was rather amused by a remark made about it by Woolliams, our keeper: "Well, if you have to fish with flies like small birds, you had better use a minnow," and he caught a fish of 21¼lb. in the same spot on the following day with a 2¼in. Brown and Gold Devon. Example is better than precept.

As regards the size of the fly, in March and April (February is hardly a fly month with us) we should probably start with a 5/0 as soon as the water gets below 2ft. 9in., and gradually work down to a 1/0 as the water dropped. In shallow pools one would use a smaller fly than in deep waters, and, of course, in the Carrots Hole you could safely use a 7/0 at any height of water, and you would probably catch nothing.

In May and June we should fish very much smaller flies, working down from a 1/0 to, say, a No. 5 double hook, and in very low water even smaller. July and August have given us very little experience what to use, but in September I should use generally No. 3 to No. 5 double hooks, though I have caught an odd fish or two with a 5/0. In October one can use slightly bigger flies than in September, but really one ought not to be allowed to fish then. It is almost like killing a cow when she is in calf. The fish are nothing to be proud of when you get them, and are certainly not of much good from an eating point of view, nor do they fight very well. Perhaps now and again a cock fish may put up a fairly good fight, but a hen fish almost never. Indeed, it is hardly to be expected that she could, for almost all the fat has been drawn away from the muscles of the body to build up the ovaries, which will then be nearly one-third of her total weight.

To show what can be done in the autumn on the Wye I may mention two days' fishing I had in 1911, days of which I am by no means proud. The water was very low throughout the whole of September, but on the 28th I got a wire from our keeper to say that there had been a good deal of rain. I caught the morning train on the following day, and when I arrived at Colcombe I found that the river, which was 10½in. on the previous evening, had risen to 1ft. 10in., but was sinking again. I started at the Carrots at two o'clock and caught two in the Hole



KNOT FOR ATTACHING THE REEL LINE TO THE TRACE.

I.—Thread the line through the ring in the usual figure-of-eight knot.

II.—Make a half-hitch round the line, and pass the short end round and through *twice*.

III.—Draw up the knot moderately tight, and

IV.—Slip it up to the ring, and bring the loop round, so that when the knot is drawn tight the loop rests above the knot, which acts as a buffer.

with a 2in. Brown and Gold Devon, 7lb. and 10½lb. The Gorse Bush and the Roaring Rocks did nothing, and the Black Hole (a good fly pool) was also blank. I reached the Lower Red Bank at four o'clock and ended up at 5.30 with eight more fish, running from 7½lb. to 12lb., all caught on a No. 3 double-hook Thunder and Lightning. I also lost two other fish and rose a third. All of these fish were hooked within a few yards of one another, and as soon as I got a fish out and started fishing again I was into another. It therefore does not seem as if it was very necessary to rest a pool after it has been disturbed by the play of a fish, for the last fish took my fly within less than an hour and a half of the first being hooked, and during that time it must have seen the other nine (including the two I lost) struggling and fighting.

On the next day the water had dropped to 1ft. 3½in., and was much clearer. This day I started at the bottom of the water, and at 9.15 I caught an 8lb. fish in Lugg's Mouth, where no fish had ever before been caught with a fly. This time it was on a Coiner 3 double hook, and I do not remember why I changed the pattern, as the Thunder and Lightning had been so successful on the previous day. I then walked up to the Lower Red Bank, and between 10.15 a.m. and eleven o'clock I caught four more, 10lb. to 13lb., all on the Coiner, and I also rose two other fish. I then went up, and, as on the previous day, did no good until I got to the Carrots, where I caught an 8½lb. fish in the Run, also with the Coiner. I then went back to the Lower Red Bank again, a two-mile walk—I was evidently very energetic in those days—and I got two more, 12lb. and 16½lb., and rose two others, all on the Coiner. I am glad to say that I have it recorded in my diary that several of the hen fish were returned, though I doubt very much whether it would be very beneficial to a fish which is just about to spawn to be pulled about in the

river for five or ten minutes. The next day the river rose, and perhaps it was just as well, or this slaughter might have continued. Beddington has aptly described this sort of fishing as "kelt-catching." It is, however, a very good instance of how well fish will take with a rise after a long period of low water.

To come now to the pattern of the fly. It will be gathered from my previous remarks I do not think that the pattern is of great importance, at any rate in the spring. The size and application are, I think, the main factors, but, as I have said before, my experience is too limited to justify my laying down the law in this way, or, indeed, to presume to write at all on the subject; but a promise is a promise. It may, however, be of interest to give a list of the flies we have found most successful, though possibly other patterns might have done as well. One thing I am quite sure about, and that is that there is no necessity for the enormous number of patterns there are in existence, and I also doubt very much whether the salmon care one brass farthing about all the little fads adopted by fly-dressers. Take, for instance, the best known fly of all, the Jock Scott, which, by the way, I never use, and mainly because it is generally so frightfully overdressed. I see in the correct dressing it has to have "horns" of blue and yellow macaw. I may be wrong, but I doubt very much whether a salmon knows whether a fly has horns or not. I believe myself that simply-dressed flies made of comparatively few materials would kill just as well as some of these complicated patterns which involve the use of feathers from half-a-dozen different birds, in addition to several various-coloured silks and two or three different sorts of tinsel. I have killed fish with an ordinary March Brown with a little silver tinsel on the body, and, of course, dressed rather larger than one would use for trout. I am afraid that the principal object of this multiplication of

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.
SILVER GREY.

LEMON GREY.
COINER.

patterns is to catch the money from the angler's pocket, and the landing of salmon is a secondary consideration.

At any rate, the eleven principal patterns we have used are as follows, with the number of fish caught with each :—

Thunder and Lightning	102
Coiner	89
Lemon Grey	89
Silver Grey	67
Torrish	11
Britannia	9
Jock Scott	9
Akroyd	7
Glistener	7
Dusty Miller	6
Butcher	6

Fish have been caught with twenty-one other patterns, but the above eleven should be enough for most people. They are more than I should use myself, and I dare say I should kill as many fish as I do now if I never fished with anything but a Thunder and Lightning, varying the size to suit the water.

I come now to the question of application, and here again I feel I am treading on dangerous ground, for I have no doubt that with more experience I should change many of my present ideas. Anyhow, I put forward the following remarks in all humility, and I should like to make it perfectly clear that they are mainly applicable to our water at Hampton Bishop—other waters other methods.

I previously stated that I would say nothing about casting, but I should like to say a few words as to the great advantage I found through learning to shoot one's line. In the first place, one can cast several yards further with very little exertion, and by gathering up the line in loose coils in one hand at the end of the cast, there is much less line to lift

from the water, and this means very much less strain on the rod. It is not fair to a rod to strain it as some anglers do by lifting the whole of the half-drowned line from the water in the back cast, and particularly so when it has to be "snatched" out of a back eddy. There is also a further advantage. In several pools there is a back eddy or swirling heavy water between the stream and the bank, and the fish frequently lie on the very edge of the stream or follow the fly round into the back eddy. If one fishes in the ordinary way, as soon as one's fly reaches the edge of the back eddy it lies inert and dead just when the fish should take it. If, however, as one's fly is coming into the straight, one pulls the line in, coil after coil, much greater life is given to the feathers, and there is more probability of the fish taking it. Of course, if one hooks a fish with several yards of line held in one's hand in loose coils, these have to be recovered, but this, I think, rather adds to the fun of the game, and certainly requires the exercise of some skill. Sometimes also one has to fish with a fly in almost dead water, and the only way to get any work on it, and to make it look like a living thing, is to begin pulling the line in almost directly after the cast is made. This may involve gathering up more line than can be comfortably "shot" with one cast. One then has to make a false cast to shoot part of the line, and the rest is released with the second cast. This false cast should be made downstream close to the bank, and not where the fish lie, for I am sure it must frighten them to see a cart-rope and a huge fly dragged through the water at lightning speed. For the same reason, if one makes a bad cast, I do not think it is advisable to snatch the line out of the water and to cast again immediately. Let it work round clear of where the fish lie, and then lift the rod and cast again. The one disadvantage of shooting one's line is that it involves holding the

rod with one hand, and this is no doubt very tiring with a heavy rod, but one's back gets equal to it after a time. I always advise beginners never to fish very hard with a fly-rod on their first day. It is not so much the casting, as holding up the rod, which puts so great a strain on the muscles of one's back. Spinning is much less tiring, and it is almost a rest to put a minnow down a pool after one has tried two or three flies.

I believe there is a good deal in the way the fly is worked, or, rather, not worked, in the water My old friend Halsten Muri always used to insist that I should never work the fly in strong streams. "You only make it more uncertain for the fish to take it." I am sure this advice is sound, though in some of our sluggish streams on the Wye it is, I am sure, necessary to give some life to the fly either by moving the rod point or by drawing the line through the rings. In the early spring, and again in the autumn, I do not think one wants to work the fly much, but in the summer I am inclined to think that one wants to give more movement to the fly and to work it more rapidly and nearer to the surface. This applies also, to a certain extent, to minnow-fishing. In the early spring I think you can hardly work the fly too slowly or too deep, and I personally keep my rod top almost touching the water and following the line round as it works into one's bank, remembering always Mr. Chaytor's advice to fish the cast right out to the end. I am ashamed to say that it has frequently happened to me to find a fish on just when I am beginning to lift for the next cast. One of the most difficult things is to know what to do when you see a great wave following your fly, and you know a fish is after it. Is it in his mouth, or is he merely following the fly? Is one to strike before one feels him, or not?

Owing, I suppose, to the fly fishing so deep we very seldom see the rise of the fish in the spring,

and know nothing about it until we feel the fish, or, possibly, see a slight swirl in the neighbourhood of one's fly. I have often noticed that the fly is a

A GOOD CATCH IN SEPTEMBER FOR TWO RODS, ALL ON FLY.

Twelve fish, 140lb. ; largest, 23½lb.

yard or two further away from one than one thinks it is. You see a rise lower down than where you imagine the fly is, and then you are "into him" or you are not.

I often wonder how deep one's fly really does fish. There is no doubt a fine line will fish deeper than a thick one, for the pressure of the stream against one's line is always tending to lift it upwards, and the finer line offering less surface, and therefore less resistance, will sink better. I had clear proof of this when I was fishing one day with Pashley at the Carrots. He was fishing with a minnow in the Hole, and I was on the Flat above. He called out to me to ask how much lead I generally used, and I told him at that height of water, "Two good-sized Jardine leads." He asked me to come and see what he had got on, and I found he had a huge heavy lead, much heavier than I ever used even in high water, and yet, he said, he was not on the bottom. "Try my rod," he said. "Well, you make the cast and I will then take the rod, for I don't understand the Malloch reel." No, he was nowhere near the bottom. He then tried with my rod and found no difficulty in getting the bait down deep enough with about half the weight of lead he was using.

We could not understand it, but all of a sudden, at dinner that evening, he called out: "I have got it!" "Got what?" said I. "What sort of a line do you use?" "Oh!" I replied, "a fine Nottingham line." "That explains it, then, for I use a fairly heavy dressed line, and it offers more resistance to the water, and therefore requires more lead to sink the bait." I need hardly say that Pashley is not one of those anglers who "fish with their boots." He is always thinking about it, and if it were not so he would not be able to kill two or three hundred fish in a season, as has occasionally happened.

On one occasion crossing to Norway, I met Mr. Percy Illingworth, and he showed me a very fine line he was experimenting with for dry-fly fishing. It was made to cut into a wind, but, in order to get the weight to bring out the play of the rod,

he had weighted it under the air-pump with, I think, a solution of mercury. I told him that if he could perfect the idea it would be just the thing for spring-fishing for salmon in those deep holes at Hampton Bishop, for it would enable one to get one's fly right down to them. I never heard anything more about it, but perhaps it is waiting, like so many things, for "when the war is over."

To come back again to the working of the fly, I believe it is not a bad plan, and especially in lowish clear water in May or June, to cast in quite an unorthodox manner. In the spring, throw more downstream, and your fly will work deeper and more slowly. As summer is approaching, throw more across the stream and keep the rod point up, and the fly will thus fish more rapidly and nearer the surface. Go, however, a step further and try a cast almost at right angles. Occasionally it will fetch a fish which would not come to a downstream cast. On three separate occasions in the same pool I have caught fish in this manner. It was in the Lower Red Bank. At the head of the pool in medium water you can wade down to a certain point, and then you must come back. On each occasion I fished this part of the water in the orthodox manner, then after going round the deep place, I began to throw again over the water which I had just fished, but this time casting at right angles with a short line, and then the fish came, which would not look at the same fly which had been put over them from above. I only wish I had more time to try experiments of this sort.

As regards striking a fish, I am glad to say I have got over my old trout-fishing fault of pulling the fly away from them, for as dear old Halsten used to say, "If you do that, sir, he will never come again." I try never to do anything until I feel it, and then I let him have it hard; but it is not so much of a strike as a gradual tightening of the line. If

a fish rises at my fly, or if I feel the slightest touch, I go on fishing the cast right out just as if nothing had happened. I then usually go back two or three yards and fish straight down to it with the same fly, and if it does not come then, go on fishing the pool right out, and then try him with another fly. On one occasion a fish rose at me twice in one cast. It was on Sept. 29, 1917, in the Lower Red Bank, and I was fishing with a three double hook Glistener. Although the water was fairly high for a fly, 2ft. 2in., it was quite clear, and I could see the fish come at the fly the first time and miss, and he then turned round and came right across the stream at the fly a second time. The keeper, who was standing on a highish bank, saw the whole performance quite clearly. The fish evidently meant to have it, but it looked as if the fly was too big for him, so I waded out and took off the Glistener, which is rather a showy fly, and put on a No. 4 double hook Silver Grey, which was very lightly dressed. I then waded in as far as I dared, so as to be able to bang the fly a bit more and to get it to work more slowly. As soon as it came over him he took it at once, and it turned out to be a cock fish of 18¾lb., which was getting rather red. There is not the slightest doubt it was the same fish, for we had seen him quite clearly before, and he came in exactly the same spot, and it was not likely there would be two fish there so big as this in September, when most of the fish run small, say from 8lb. to 15lb.

As a rule, in the spring I rarely put more than two flies down a pool, for they usually take so readily, and if I do no good with the two flies, I then fish the pool with one minnow. That, I think, is enough, especially if another rod has to fish the same pool later in the day. I don't believe in teasing fish, but I would rather get over the ground quickly and come back and try the pool again if I have seen a fish move. Later on the light will

30lb. COCK SALMON.

With spawning livery nearly developed. Caught at Hampton Bishop in August, 1916, with a small (No. 3) Lemon Grey.

have changed, and he may then be more inclined to take. They call me the "Lightning Fisher" at Hampton Bishop, as I get over the ground so quickly. Of course, in the afternoon, when no one has to fish behind you, it is another thing, and if you like to tease your fish, do so; but do not forget that those are the fish against which you have to try your skill on the following day, for on our water in the morning you fish the same beat as you did on the previous afternoon.

The great disadvantage of having had one's first education with trout is that one is so inclined to keep on trying fly after fly in the hopes of finding the right "Poison." I am sure, when the water is low and clear, it is a mistake to over-fish your pools, whether it is with the fly or bait. I shall never forget the advice given me by the late Mr. John Hotchkis—who made the Wye. "In bright hot weather with low water only fish for an hour or two in the morning, and don't put a line on the water again until after five or six o'clock. If you will exercise this self-restraint you will catch more fish than if you keep slogging away all day long." I can only add to this that my experience in Norway is in accordance with this valuable advice, and my old friend—and somewhat stern master—Halsten Muri sometimes would not allow me to go near the river until eight o'clock in the evening, and even then, if he thought it was too bright, I was not allowed to fish the best pool until after nine o'clock. He was very strict with me, but he taught me most of the little I know.

I can, however, give several instances where a third pattern has been successful, at any rate in rising fish after trying two other flies. I will give them in the order in which they occurred as recorded in my diary:—

1911. June 5.—Water 11in.; very clear. Slight north wind, hot and cloudless; only fished Lower

12½lb. HEN WYE SALMON.

Caught on September 18, 1917. With the ovaries nearly fully developed.

Red Bank in evening after sunset. Rose two fish at 8.30 p.m. with Prosser's Wye Grub. *Fourth* time down the pool.

1913. June 6.—Water 1ft. 1½in.; very clear, very fine. Rose a fish in Lower Red Bank. *Third* time down. Little Inky Boy.

1917. June 23.—Water 1ft. 3in.; clear. Strong N.W. wind, dull, coldish. Caught a fish, 16½lb., Lower Red Bank, very stale, 7.20 p.m., with Prosser's Black. *Fourth* fly down the pool.

1917. Sept. 30.—Water 1ft. 6in.; very clear, very fine. Caught a fish, 8lb., in Lower Red Bank, 10.30—Thunder and Lightning, four double hook; and another in same pool, 20lb., 11.15—Britannia, four double hook. This was the *third* fly down the pool. It just touched the fly and came again the next cast, and was hooked outside the mouth. Only one other fish seen in the pool, and none elsewhere, except in the Carrots.

I also have rather a curious record with the prismatic flies. I have tried them on many occasions, though perhaps in a half-hearted sort of way. It is always difficult to give new patterns a fair trial, as one naturally puts more reliance on old patterns which have "proved" themselves. The one solitary fish I have caught with one of these flies was a 13½-pounder on Sept. 18, 1917, also in the Lower Red Bank. There were very few fish about, and after trying two flies down the pool I put on a Prism Bow 7 double hook (maker's number) and caught the fish. It turned out a nasty wet afternoon and my wife refused to fish, so I went back again to my favourite spot and sent Woolliams, our keeper, up to the Carrots, and gave him a Prism Bow, but made him promise to try another fly first. He came back with two fish, 11¼lb. and 12½lb., caught in the Carrots Run with this fly, after having tried a small Lemon Grey first. I, on the other hand, could do nothing more with the

44½ lb. LARGE SPRING FISH.
Caught by Mr. Hutton, April 7, 1912.

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prismatic, but caught two fish, one 13¾lb., on a No. 5 double hook Thunder and Lightning, and the other 12½lb. on a No. 3 double hook Coiner. The next day the river came down in flood, and continued unfishable for four days.

As regards playing fish when hooked, this can only be learnt by experience. I believe in playing them hard and in getting them out as quickly as possible, both with minnow and fly, and I do not find there is much difference in the way they fight or in the time it takes to kill them, whether they are hooked with a minnow or fly. I should think on an average we get most of our fish on to the bank in about ten minutes, or sometimes less, and this applies to heavy spring fish as well as to the smaller fish one catches later on. I think the usual formula of "a minute to the pound" is nonsense. At any rate, I landed a fish of 44¾lb. in twelve minutes timed by the watch. Of course, if you have got to gaff your own fish it is another question, and especially when he has got the hook in the corner of his jaw, and the stream acts on him like an otter and makes it difficult to get him within gaffing distance. The longest time I ever took playing a fish was fifty-five minutes in Norway. It was not a large fish, but I only had a 14ft. rod, and, having no gaff, we had to net him in a very nasty pool with very strong water under the bank I was fishing from. With a gaff one has more chances than with a net, and where the fish run heavy I consider it absolute folly to prohibit the use of the gaff, as used to be the case on the Wye some years back. It only means many fish getting away either with or without tackle in their mouths, and in many cases to die.

There is no doubt that the longer a fish is on the more chance there is of losing him, and I am convinced that more fish are lost by playing them too lightly than by playing them too hard. I believe in holding them hard, or what appears to

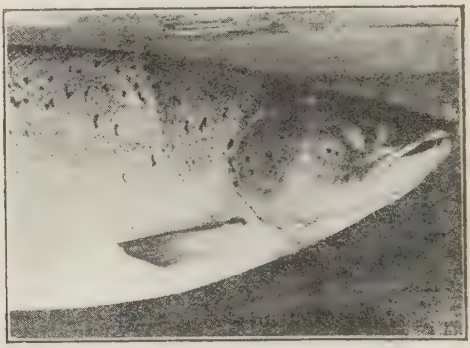
LOWER RED BANK.

be hard, for as long as you keep the rod-point up and the line is not drowned you cannot hold them hard with a fair pull. One's tackle ought to stand a dead strain of 10lb. to 20lb. or more, and it is impossible to get a direct pull with the rod-point of, at the very outside, more than 2lb. or 3lb. This is easily proved by getting hold of the end of the line while somebody pulls with the rod for all he is worth. It is surprising how slight the strain is. It is almost impossible to break one's tackle by a direct pull when the rod-point is kept up, but, of course, if you drop the point you are playing the fish more or less with a tight line.

If a fish makes a big run, let him go, and if he or she will only play about or stand upon his or her head out of the water, so much the better. That is the sort of fish which kills itself and requires no assistance from the angler. If you allow them to do it, it is the sulky fish, which just sail about in a leisurely fashion, which will take a long time to kill. Those are the fish to hold hard, and I have generally found that if one gets below them and pulls hard enough you can make them move, though Ernest Crosfield tells me I am quite wrong, and that one ought to get above them. If I ever do get hold of a real bad one that will not move I have made up my mind I am going to hand-line him. One pulls big kelts in with the line, and I do not see why one should not be equally successful in moving a sulky salmon in the same way, though it would be advisable to have someone to hold the rod and to have the line all clear in case the fish were to make a bolt. Of course, foul-hooked fish are quite another story. If you hook a really big fish by the back fin or in the tail, or wherever it may be, you are nearly helpless, and almost anything may happen, though, again, I believe it is better to hang on hard.

One does not get broken by holding a fish too hard, but by letting one's line get drowned in the

water, and if a fish then makes a rush he is pulling against the weight of the line in the water and not against the tip of the rod. I therefore always like to have as short a line as possible, and if I hook a fish when I am wading I get out of the water as quickly as I can and on to the highest part of the bank so as to keep the line out of the water as much as possible. One cannot always avoid accidents,



27½lb. MAIDEN SPRING FISH.

but one can do one's best not to ask for trouble. This all applies much more to fly-fishing than to spinning, for a fine Nottingham line offers very much less resistance to the water than the comparative cart-rope which one has to use with a fly-rod.

The most dangerous moment is when you are bringing the fish up to the gaff. If you have a very short line and the fish makes a plunge there is less to give way, for there is always a certain amount of "give" in one's line. For that reason

I generally try to bring the fish to the gaff by moving away from the edge of the water, rather than by reeling in. This also applies to bringing a fish in when playing him. If you leave the reel alone and move back slowly from the edge of the

27¼lb. SPRING FISH.

Showing the numerous small spots on a salmon which has spawned before.

river, he will generally come in quietly, and then you can shorten your line by approaching the river again and reeling him up as you go. It is rather like what the Americans call "pumping" a fish.

There is, perhaps, nothing worse than a half-cooked fish in a strong stream. He is then like a log of wood and you cannot hold him, and it is generally better, if there are no obstructions, to let him go and to follow him as quickly as possible. In a pool where there is a danger of this happening

I think it is advisable to keep him up as much as you can while he is still lively enough to help you. Old Halsten taught me a useful tip. "When the fish is lying quiet, put your rod-point down to the water, but do not touch the reel, and walk slowly up the river, and he will follow you like a lamb. Of course, the fish may go down again, and you may or may not be able to walk him up again, but once he is half cooked this is no longer so easy. Why they should come I do not understand, unless it is that your line, being bellied by the stream, makes them feel that someone is trying to pull them down, and consequently they are all the more ready to go up. The Gorse Bush is a particularly bad pool in this way, and once you get below the fence you will have to go right down and through the Roaring Rocks, where all sorts of trouble may happen. You generally hook the fish when you are standing above the fence, and many a salmon I have walked up two or three times sooner than let them get into the strong run below.

In the same way, if you have a fish which splashes on the top of the water in a dangerous fashion—as Beddington calls it, "shaking his face at you"—it is astonishing how putting the rod-point close to the water will quieten him. I suppose the fish imagines someone is trying to pull him upwards out of the water, which he is determined shall not happen.

I generally find that cock fish are more difficult to bring in than hens. Sometimes, just when you think you are going to land him he gets up a second wind and may take as long again to kill. The worst of all is a big hen fish of 25lb. or more that has spawned before. Some of these are the hardest fighting fish I know, and if ever I get hold of a very rough fish I am always looking out for the numerous "spots" which show that it is on its second journey up the river. I shall never forget one which

I hooked with a minnow at the Roaring Rocks. Curiously enough, I felt a very slight touch, which could not possibly have been the bottom, just as my minnow was coming over the deepest part of the pool. After fishing the cast out, I immediately cast from the same spot again, as nearly as possible the same length of line as before. This time she had it all right, and very soon let me know that she did not like it at all. First upstream as fast as she could go, then back again to where she was hooked, then right across the river close to some dangerous bushes growing in the water, and after that downstream like a torpedo. Then she went back to the deep water, and every time she came to the top she began to lash out in a horrible manner. However, all things must have an end, and at last we got the gaff into her, and she proved to be a hen fish that had spawned before, weighing 32lb. This is the largest hen fish I have caught, for it is not often one sees a hen fish over 30lb. The largest I have heard of on the Wye fell to Pashley's rod, and weighed 40lb. This fish had also spawned before.

Just one word of warning about walking a fish up. I once hooked a fish at the very tail of Tinker's Hole in pretty high water, and, as I knew by experience, if I let it get out of the pool it might take me down quarter of a mile or more. So, as it stopped quiet, I started to walk it up, but after going a short distance I felt my line catch against something, and I very soon found I was fast in one of the cement blocks we had put in for the fish to lie behind. The end of it was a smash. One lives and learns. There will be no more walking fish up for me, unless I am quite sure the water is deep enough. I forgot to say that when you are walking a fish up, don't touch the reel, for I think the click excites or annoys them.

Now this concludes all I have to say about fly-fishing, and perhaps I have written far too much

and more than my limited experience and knowledge justify. I can, however, only redeem my promise to my good friend Marston by relating my own experience.

FEMALE GILL MAGGOT.

Taken from a salmon that has spawned before.

Chapter VI.

Minnow-Fishing.

As I said before, I consider minnow-fishing more difficult than fly-fishing, and for that reason I feel even more diffidence in dealing with this branch of fishing. There are so many others who are infinitely better qualified than I am to write about this subject. I can, however, give the results of our experience for whatever they are worth.

The rod I use is one of Hardy's split-cane "Murdoch" rods, 12ft. in length. I occasionally see letters about very short light rods, but I think they are a mistake. It is a great advantage to have a fairly long rod for spinning, so as to clear bushes or long grass behind you in the back cast. Further than that, which is most important, it gives you more command over the line in working the bait and also is better in playing a fish. I think, too, that a split-cane is preferable to a greenheart, not only for the advantage which, as I said before, it gives you in landing a salmon, but also because of its lightness. As the rod must be held by one hand only—for the other is required for working the reel—a light rod is essential, unless one wants to break one's back. The casting is not tiring, but the effort of holding up the rod with one hand during a hard day's spinning is a considerable strain on the muscles. My rod has agate rings throughout, and it is certainly advisable to have either agate or porcelain rings, as the fine spinning-line wears better, and it also enables one to get out a longer line. I should have mentioned before that in shooting the line when fly-fishing, it is a great

advantage to have an agate ring on the point of the rod and also on the butt next to the reel.

I think the Nottingham reel is the best for

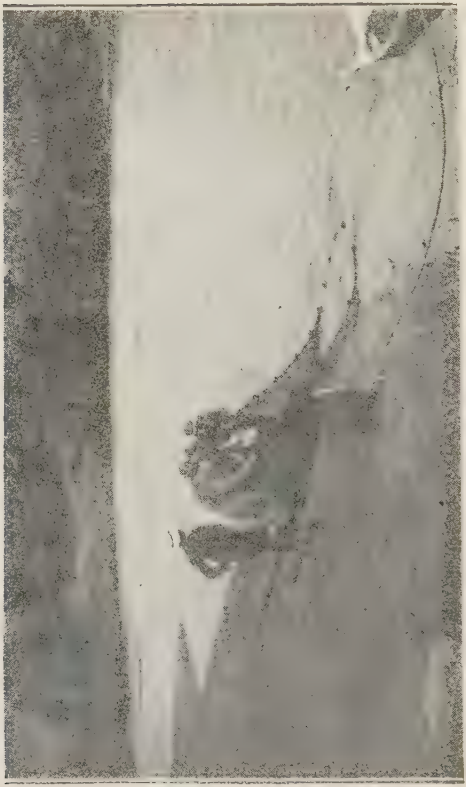
A FINE SPRING FISH—44 lb.

spinning, except, perhaps, on a windy day. I myself use a "Silex" reel of the old pattern; for many reasons I do not like Hardy's new pattern. The other day I bought one of the "Rolo" reels

They are beautifully made, and although I have not quite thoroughly mastered mine yet, I can do just as well with it as with the "Silex."

Woolliams, our keeper, who is first class with a spinning rod, always uses a Nottingham reel, and he can cast considerably further than I can; but I do not pretend to be a long caster. Although long casting is absolutely necessary at times, I believe, both in fly-fishing and in spinning, in using as short a line as possible, so long as it will cover the fish properly. All the rest of us, ladies and all, use the old pattern "Silex," and it is a treat to watch the ladies fish. The "Silex" is really not so difficult to learn, and I think I could undertake to teach anyone, who has any idea of fishing, how to use one in about quarter of an hour. Of course, one cannot expect to get perfect in that time, for it takes years of experience to become a really good spinner for salmon. Casting is by no means all of it, for one has to learn the bottom of the river as well as the surface, and each pool requires different treatment.

Of course, everybody will get overruns sometimes with a "Silex," but it is very rarely I get a really bad one now. The last I had was in 1916, when my line struck a swift as the bait was flying out. It stopped the bait, and the result was a "bird's nest" on my reel. The swift just dropped on the water, and then got up and flew away. Curiously enough, Morant, who was fishing with me that day, also struck a swift in the same way. The worst overrun I ever had was in 1907, when I was fishing Holme Lacy. We were stopping at Fownhope, which was on the opposite side of the river to our water. It was a bitterly cold morning, so instead of going the short way by the ferry, I decided to walk about a mile up to the bridge to get the circulation going. I got beautifully warm and fished away down from the bridge to the Cribs, where a fence comes down to the river. I could not fish left-handed in those



MARKING SMOLTS ON THE WYE, MAY, 1912.

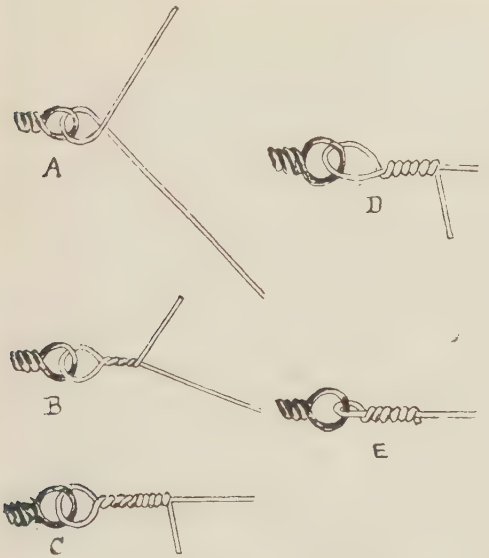
days, and I thought there was just room for one more cast. I had not realised that one's line is running off the reel as soon as one has started the forward cast, and consequently my bait was further away from the rod-point than I expected. It struck the fence, and the tail-triangle was snapped off, and the thirty yards of line, instead of going out over the river, was all in tangle on the reel. It took me over half-an-hour to put things right, with the result that afterwards I was as cold as ever. Moral: Never cast when there is any obstruction or anyone standing near you. One's bait travels at a very rapid pace, as my wife's little dog discovered one day when he came behind her just as she was going to cast. He was nearly carried into the river, but luckily the hooks were only caught in his hair. It must have given poor little Chico a bit of a jar, but he now always keeps at a respectable distance from anyone fishing.

It is curious that although he has been in at the death of many a fish he does not take the least interest in it; but it is quite a different story with Chubby, a charming little fox-terrier, who belongs to Mrs. Mills, our housekeeper. He has quite adopted me, and when he sees me start off in the morning with a rod in my hand there is a tremendous excitement. He watches the fishing most intently, and he thoroughly understands what we are playing at, and as soon as I hook a fish, even before the reel begins to scream, he begins barking like mad, and this continues until the fish is gaffed. Very often when I go to the Carrots the people at the house can hear him barking, and then comes the remark, "Mr. Hutton has got hold of another fish." Poor little Chubby, he has passed "the fourteen years which Nature permits," and although he is in perfect health and quite happy, he cannot see anything more than two yards away from him. He still comes out fishing, but if it is a nasty cold or

wet day he does not stop very long, but goes home to his box.

I always use a fine Nottingham line with about 80 yards of backing, and 100 yards will generally last me up to the end of April, when I put on a finer line. I am most particular about running the line off on to a drier every evening, and I am always testing my line, and after playing a fish, or after I have been hard on the bottom, I fasten the line again to the trace, for the knot is the weakest part of one's tackle. Occasionally, and especially during frosty weather, when the ice which accumulates in the rings wears the line badly, one has to break off several yards of line. After all a spring fish is worth two or three pounds, and the cost of a new line in comparison is almost nothing. It is better to test your tackle before you hook a fish, and not wait until you get broken.

We always use wire for the trace instead of gut. It is ever so much cheaper, infinitely stronger, and shows less in the water, though I do not think that matters so much in spinning. One can buy it in the reel; but do not take the reel with you fishing, for if a drop of water gets on to it, it may spoil the whole of the wire. It is better to cut off as many lengths as one wants, about 3ft. to 4ft. long, and coil them up and carry them in a cigarette-case between a piece of flannel soaked in vaseline. Also anoint the wire reel with vaseline occasionally to prevent rust, for the least touch of rust ruins the wire. All one has to carry besides one's baits and mounts is the cigarette-case, a small box of swivels, a few leads, and a small pair of pliers to cut the wire. If the wire gets bent or kinked, it is not worth while trying to straighten it, for it takes less than a couple of minutes to put on a new length. I do not suppose one's trace with the swivels will cost more than a few pence at the outside. A really good gut trace, strong enough to hold a monster, of which there is always a



RIGHT WAY. WRONG WAY.

TWISTING THE WIRE TRACE.

Thread the wire through the swivel and bend the short end over so as to make a *small loop* as in *A*, so that the two ends form rather more than a right angle. Grasp the two ends, where they cross, *firmly* with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, and holding the loop and swivel with the left hand twist the two ends together, so that each end is twisted *over the other*, as shown in *B*. Three or four complete turns are sufficient. Finish off by twisting the short end round the trace for three or four turns, as shown in *C*, and then cut off the short end with a pair of pliers. This knot cannot slip if the two ends are properly *twisted*. If the short end is merely *turned* round the trace as shown in *D*, there is some danger, under a heavy strain, of the coils slipping down the trace and thus forming a sharp loop at the swivel (as shown in *E*), which is likely to snap. In fastening a Devon, or any other bait which can slip up the trace, it is easier to thread the Devon on to the trace before fastening the latter to the swivel at the head of the mount.

chance on the Wye, will cost a good many shillings.

There is a right and a wrong way of twisting the wire, and it is very important that it should be done in the right way, for otherwise in the strain of playing a heavy fish the twisted loop may draw tight and the wire might snap. As it is difficult to describe in words how the wire should be twisted, I have made a sketch (see page 83) which, I hope, will make this point clear.

Sometimes, and especially in a strong wind, the wire may double back and cause a kink, which would snap with the least strain, so it is always advisable after each cast, when you have reeled in the line, to glance at your wire to see that all is straight. Occasionally, but really very rarely, the fish in its struggles may put a kink in the wire and so cause a break. In eleven years at Hampton Bishop I have only recorded five breaks due to this cause, and, curiously enough, two of them happened this season. On the other hand, during the same period we have landed 1,086 fish with the bait, almost all of which were hooked when using a single-wire trace. After all, gut can break, too, and is much more liable to be cut on a rock or a snag than wire, and the advantages of wire are so many as compared with gut that I think one can put up with an occasional "snap."

The others all use boat-shaped leads with two swivels at one end to which the wire trace is fastened. There is a ring at the other end to which one fastens the line. They are made in various weights to suit the conditions of the water—heavy leads for strong streams and for deep pools, and lighter leads for slack or shallow water. Of course, as the water drops one uses a lighter lead. I personally use Jardine leads. Between the line and the wire I have a twisted gut collar fifteen inches in length (Plate No. 3 in pocket at end of book), on which I put two leads or, in exceptional

cases, three. There is a swivel at each end of the collar, and the line is fastened to one end and the trace to the other. The advantage is that one can easily change one's lead to suit the pool. I bend the leads slightly, and this absolutely prevents any kinking of the line.

One's leads are apt to get polished by rubbing against gravel, and particularly in the Carrots Hole and the Roaring Rocks, where, under certain conditions, one has to throw at right-angles on to a gravel bed on the other side of the river, which conveniently slopes down under the water, to get one's bait down anywhere near the deep water where the fish lie. You have to feel your leads rubbing on the gravel for some distance until your bait reaches the deep water, and then you feel nothing more until the fish comes. I had rather an interesting experience once at Lugg's Mouth. There was an old willow stump, with some branches on it, in the water about two yards from the bank. I let my bait swing round as far as I dared, and I then had to lift my rod and to reel in fairly quickly in order to clear the branches. Just as the bait was coming in I saw a grey shadow following it, but when the minnow came near the surface he turned back. I immediately cast again, but must have thrown a yard too far, for when the bait—or, rather, the leads—came into view, I saw the same fish following them, and he seized one of the somewhat polished leads and gave me a really hard pull Needless to say, he would not come again. I sometimes wonder whether some of the hard "knocks" we get, which fail to hook, are due to the fish seizing the lead instead of the minnow.

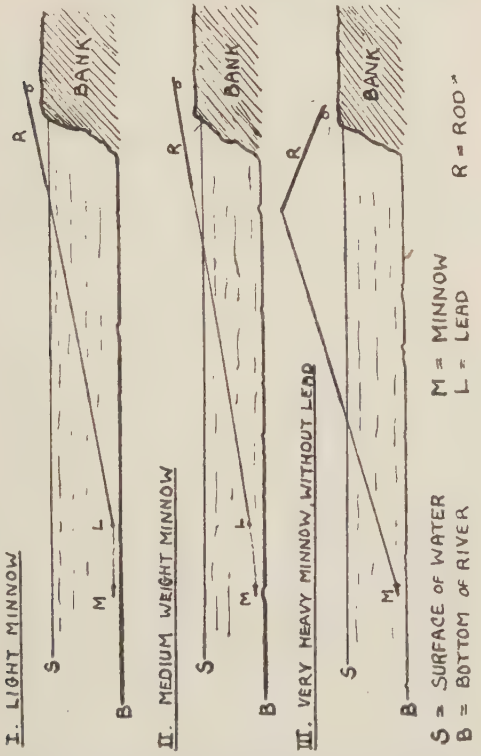
Now, I do not propose to say much about casting for much the same reasons that I gave about fly-fishing. It is always best to get a friend to give one a lesson. The instructions given in Hardy's catalogues for using the old pattern "Silex" reel were quite good, but the beginner usually makes the

mistake of setting the brake too hard. This means that as soon as he lets go of the trigger which releases the brake, the line is immediately stopped dead, and consequently one has less margin to work on. If one lets go too soon the bait does not go far enough, and if one is only half a second too late there is an overrun. By the way, if you get a slight overrun, do not try to recover it by pulling the line off the reel, for then the bait will sink to the bottom, and you may lose bait, trace, and lead, for it is usually the knot on the line which gives, when, finally, in despair one has to pull hard to try and recover a minnow which is fast on the bottom. The best plan is to get hold of one's line and to pull it in as quickly as possible, and then straighten out the overrun.

I like to have my brake set as lightly as possible, so that in the back swing the bait just does not draw off the line. I only use the trigger just to start the cast, and let go immediately. The brake comes into action at once, and it puts a gradual check on one's line as it is flying out. I hope I have made this clear, for it is difficult to describe the act of casting in words. I could probably show anyone by the riverside how to do it in less time than it has taken to write the above.

In making a cast one should stand facing nearly upstream and throw with a sort of underhand swing, rather like underhand bowling with a cricket-ball. To begin with, never be afraid of throwing the bait well up into the air. Never force a cast with a "Silex" reel, for that means a certain overrun. If you want to make a longer cast, do it by taking a longer swing on the back cast, and by throwing the bait well up into the air so as to give it plenty of time to attain the length required before it reaches the water. One can also get a longer cast by not reeling the lead right up to the top ring, but by leaving about a foot or a little more of line between the top and the lead. This, of

course, gives one more leverage, and should give one greater length of cast. Generally speaking, one



regulates one's cast not by force, but by the length of the back swing, and in making a long cast one will swing the bait round much further than for a

short one. Perhaps the accompanying diagram will make this clearer.

The direction in which the minnow will travel depends entirely on how far round one carries the rod point; if one brings it too far the minnow will travel straight downstream instead of across it, as it should do, in most cases, at an angle of about 30deg. to 45deg. from a line drawn straight across the river. If you want to cast the bait more downstream bring the rod point well round with the forward cast. If you want to throw at right angles or upstream, swing further back, and do not bring the rod-point round so far when the bait is coming forward.

It is also of great advantage to be able to fish with either hand. This enables one to fish places where there is a fence or other obstruction which prevents a right- or left-handed cast, as the case may be. Why is it, when a fence comes down to the river in the middle of a pool, that fish almost invariably lie opposite to it? There is always a fish opposite the fence at the lower end of the Carrots, though they never take there, and the most taking spots in the Gorse Bush and the Roaring Rocks are just opposite their respective fences. One ought also to be able to fish with either hand, so as to cast right-handed from the left bank and with the left hand from the other bank. For the benefit of those who don't know I should state that the right and left banks of a river are those that lie to the right or left hand when one is facing *downstream*.

Probably the first difficulty the beginner with a spinning rod has to overcome is to be able to cast *always* the same length in any particular pool. It is much more difficult when there is a strong wind, especially down stream. It is more than probable that I am not so regular in length as I think I am, but anyhow I know enough to realise the great importance of it. Take for example the

Carrots Flat or the Gorse Bush, both of which are glides, which are much the same to look at all the way down, and consequently rather monotonous to fish, especially when there are no fish showing. The former is about a hundred yards long, and fish may lie anywhere, so you dare not miss any of it; but to fish the whole of it carefully will require quite an hour. It is rather like fishing in a canal, but the smooth, unbroken surface of the water is no guide to the force of the current. As Mr. Chaytor pointed out in his excellent book, glides are most deceptive. Luckily it does not require long casting, as most of the fish lie between the middle of the river and the left bank, so that a 25 yard or 30 yard cast will easily cover the water. Let us suppose, for example, that one is casting, or trying to cast, say 26 yards. Cast number one is, say, 26 yards exactly, then one steps down the regulation two yards, and we will imagine that cast number two is 28 yards instead of 26 yards, then another two yards, and this time we cast 26 yards again. A moment's thought will show that the second and third casts have fished the same water, and that the water which number two cast should have covered *has not been fished at all*, and this may be just where the fish is lying. One might get over the difficulty by fishing the water more closely, but this would mean taking two hours instead of one hour to fish that old canal. I do not think there is any pool on our water which I dislike more, but it gives us on an average fourteen fish a year, and is our fourth best catch, as the following shows. These are the number of fish caught in ten years in our six best pools :—

Carrots Hole.. ..	338	Carrots Flat and Run..	141
Lower Red Bank..	235	Black Hole.. ..	127
Roaring Rocks ..	212	Gorse Bush.. ..	88

We have altogether twenty-four catches, namely, sixteen on the Hampton Bishop or left bank, and

eight on the Rotherwise side. Some of them are quite short catches. For example, one can fish the Nook with less than a dozen casts; but this little spot gives us on an average six fish a year. In 1913 we caught ten fish there. Then again the Blocks—so-called because of the cement blocks we put in for fish to lie behind—gave us five fish last season, and half-a-dozen casts will fish the whole of it. It is not always the biggest pool which gives the best fishing. Personally, I prefer small pools, so long as they are not too far apart. A pool which takes one an hour to fish becomes monotonous, and you get tired before you reach the end, and consequently do not fish it as well as you ought to do.

Assuming the cast is made, I immediately reel in a yard or so of line quickly to pick up the slack line and to get in touch with my bait. Under ordinary circumstances I fish with the rod-point almost touching the water. I place the butt against the groin and hold the rod with the left hand, and the right hand has hold of the handle of the reel. I follow the line round, as it works into one's bank, reeling in very slowly, just keeping in touch with the bait. When the line has straightened I slowly reel up about two yards of line and then lift my rod and reel in as fast as I can, so as to waste no time before the next cast. I think it is only waste of time to reel the whole of the line in slowly, for fish practically never follow the minnow, though a kelt may do so. This question of working the reel after the cast is very important, but I am afraid one can only learn by experience. One just wants to keep in touch with one's bait and no more. In some pools I reel in slowly, in others not at all, and in some cases I actually let the line out in order to keep the bait deep. If you reel in fast you will certainly cause your minnow to rise from the bottom. A good deal depends also on the strength of the stream, and in deep water with a strong

stream one does not need to reel in at all, and occasionally one may have to let line out. Each pool, and indeed each part of a pool, will require different treatment, and this again will vary with the height of the water. It is the acquiring of this knowledge which necessitates so much experience, and which makes spinning so much more difficult than fly-fishing. In some pools you have to throw well downstream, and others fish best when you cast at an angle of 30 deg., and in some cases you have to throw at right angles, or even upstream, in order to present your minnow in a proper manner.

Now as regards the depth at which one's minnow ought to fish, I do not want to lay down the law, but, as far as my experience goes, it is not necessary to grub on the bottom for salmon when you are spinning. He is naturally a surface-feeding animal, and he can rise up to take a minnow as wall as a fly; but you want to have it somewhere near him for him to see it. I like to feel the bottom now and again, just to know where I am; but I certainly do not think it is necessary to have your minnow almost touching the bottom. It is a very expensive game if you do too much of it. I was glad to find the other day that Wyndham Smith, who has had far more experience on the Wye than I have, is of the same opinion. After all, a salmon is much more likely to see a minnow a foot or two above his eyes than one which passes him on a level with the point of his nose.

There is nothing I dislike more than a heavy bait. I am sure it is better to fish with a light minnow and to get the casting power by means of the lead. A heavy minnow is always catching the bottom, and frequently requires holding the rod up to get it to fish at all. As will be seen from the accompanying diagram (Plate No. 4 in pocket at end of book), one thus loses all the advantage of being able to fish with the rod-point almost touching the water—namely, that you are

A TAKE OF WYE SALMON.

A day and a-half's fishing for three rods. Sixteen fish, 35[illegible] lbs. [illegible] Average, 22lb.

practically fishing with a tight line and can feel the least touch, and can strike the fish at once. It is astonishing how extraordinarily sensitive one's fingers get; indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that one can feel a floating leaf or twig touch your line. It is also surprising how gently a fish can take a minnow, and it is only practice which enables one to distinguish between a fish and the bottom. A touch from the latter when your minnow is coming round in a strong stream is very like a fish, and if you strike hard it probably means a breakage.

There is also another great advantage about light minnows. You can work them as slowly as you like in quite slack water, and I am sure in the spring you cannot spin too slowly for salmon. I know no better spinning bait than those beautiful Light Devons made by Messrs. Hatton of Hereford; but when the water gets low I find even these too heavy for some pools, and then I use the celluloid baits made by the Dreadnought Reel Company. They are not so easy to cast, especially in a wind, but they are just the thing for slow running water with a bad bottom. It is, perhaps, possible to know too much about a water, and some of the rocks and ledges I have seen, when the water was dead low, make one wonder however we get a minnow off which has caught in one of these awful places. If it was not for these light baits, there are some of our pools I should never dare to fish as slowly as one ought to do, for one would waste half the day getting one's minnow off the bottom. It is a serious thing to lose minnows nowadays, for it is almost impossible to replace them.

There are, of course, occasions when one wants a larger and heavier bait, and in high water, say from 3ft. 6in. to 3ft., I generally use one of Hardy's leaded Phantoms. They are weighted to give casting power, but the cork body gives them buoyancy, so that one can fish perfectly well with one's rod-point on the water. We never use the

three triangles with which they are usually mounted. One good triangle on the tail is sufficient, and the others do more harm than good. A fish may take the bait fairly and be hooked on the tail hook, but in its struggles it may get one of the other triangles hooked somewhere outside, thus becoming a foul-hooked fish, and this may break away the original hold and so cause the loss of the fish. Formerly I used them with all three triangles. First the head one was discarded, then the middle one, and now I never use anything but a single triangle on the tail. I wish Hardy's would make these Phantoms with a hollow centre, so that they would run up the line away from the hook like a Devon. The Dreadnought Reel Company have adopted this idea, and I think it a great improvement. The short end of gut by which the tail-triangle is fixed to the ring at the tail of Hardy's Phantoms is a source of weakness, as it gives the fish more leverage, and hardly a season passes in which one of us does not lose a fish through the gut breaking. If there are two or three inches of gut for the fish to play on there is much less chance of a breakage. In the same way, I should never use a spoon mounted in the ordinary way with a triangle attached to the tail of the spoon. I would rather have a flying triangle fastened to an inch or two of twisted gut, which is fixed to the ring at the head of the spoon. One cannot have one's mounts too flexible, and I think it is a mistake to bind the gut mount for a Devon with wire just above the bead.

As I said before, one can hardly spin too slowly in the spring, but when the water gets low and clear, and also later in the year, I think it is a good plan to work one's minnow much faster and nearer the surface of the water, but under these conditions most of my fishing is done with a fly, though there are times when one has to fish with a minnow or go without fish.

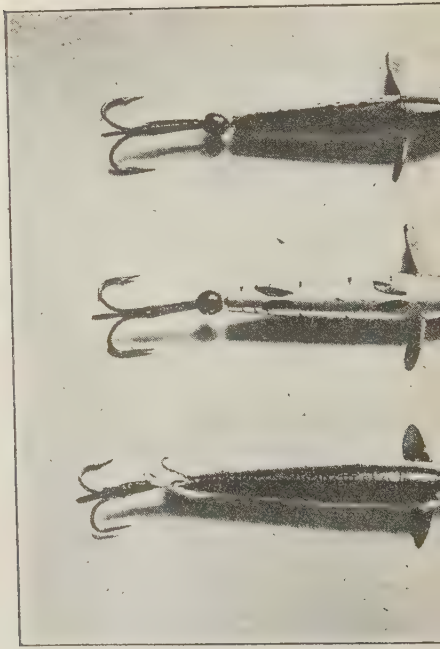
As regards the idea of using a large single hook

instead of a triangle when spinning, I must confess I feel rather sceptical. All the really good fishermen I know use the triangle. Our losses are very small—we have a record one season of fifty fish being landed out of the first fifty-two fish hooked with the minnow, and there have been many days in the spring when every single fish which has run at the minnow has been landed. If you have a good thing, why discard it for something else?

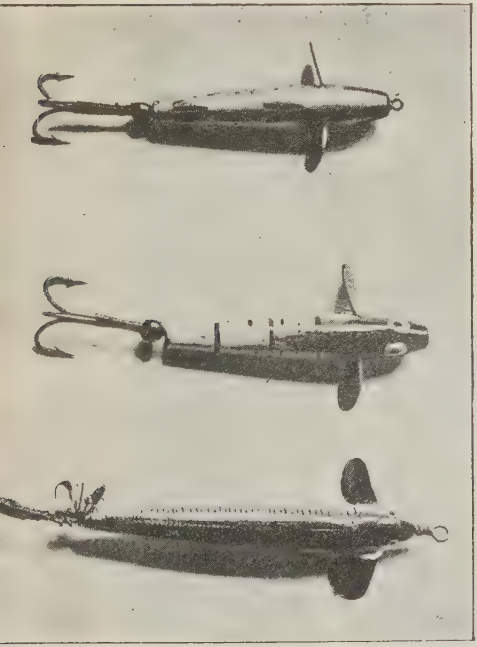
I now come to the question of the pattern of the bait. In the early spring, and with medium to high water with fresh-run fish, I really don't think it matters. Unless I see a fish which has not taken the first bait offered, I very seldom fish a pool down a second time with another minnow, excepting perhaps the deep waters of the Carrots Hole and the Roaring Rocks, where the fish may not have seen the first bait. I have tried it so often without success that I think, generally speaking, it is waste of time. In the early spring in good fishing water the fish take so well that, as a rule, the first bait is sufficient. It is better to get on and fish another pool, and then come back again, and a fresh fish may have come up or the light may have changed. I think this applies particularly to the late afternoon or evening, for though I cannot be positive about it, I am inclined to think that as the light begins to go the fish begin to run again, and there is therefore every hope of a fresh fish being found.

Time after time it has happened that very few fish have been seen all day, and the angler who has been fishing the top beat in the afternoon reports, when he returns in the evening, that crowds of fish have been showing on the Carrots Flat, but would look at nothing. As Beddington puts it, "The family have arrived." We generally do well the next day.

As regards running fish, they are generally very difficult to catch. A fish may show itself, and by the time one's minnow comes over the spot the salmon



HATTON'S
HATTON'S
HARDY'S BROWN AND GOLD PHANT



D GOLD DEVON.
SILVER DEVON.
HARDY'S BLUE AND SILVER PHANTOM.

MR. HUTTON'S BEST FISH (44lb).

may be 100 yards up the river. I think also that they do not take so well. They are in such a hurry that they have only time to snap at the bait. At any rate, our experience is that we have more runs which fail to hook, and that we lose more fish, when the water is on the high side and the salmon are still running. It is when the water drops and the fish begin to really settle down that we do the best. Of course, when the water gets low and the run is beginning to come to an end, the fish don't take quite so well.

The following notes from our diary will serve as an illustration of the fish showing themselves in the evening. On April 16, 1917, the water rose to 4ft. and got very thick, but as the barometer was going up I telegraphed to Beddington to come at once. We arrived on the evening of April 18, and were much disgusted to find that the water, which had been dropping and clearing nicely, had risen again to 3ft. 7in. It went up to 5ft. in the night, and on the following day it was 4ft. 4in. in the morning and dropped to 3ft. 4in. It was quite thick, so fishing was out of the question, but as it began to clear in the evening we felt quite hopeful about the next day. Here is the result:—

April 20.—2ft. 11½in to 2ft. 7½in., 47 deg., clear. N.W. strong; very fine. Hutton did nothing. Beddington one, 27¼lb., on the Carrots Flat at 4 p.m. with a Brown and Gold Devon, 2½in., and touched another. Hardly any fish seen until the evening, when a lot were seen in the Carrots.

April 21.—2ft. 5¼in. to 2ft. 3in., 49 deg., clear. N.W. strong; fine, some clouds. Hutton three, 18¼lb., 21¾lb., 21¾lb., lost another. Beddington three, 16lb., 16¾lb., 22¼lb., lost another. All the fish caught were fresh-run, and three had sea-lice on them. Not many fish seen.

April 22.—2ft. 1¼in. to 2ft., 51 deg., very clear.

N.W. moderate; dull, a little sun. Hutton two, 20¾lb., 21¾lb., one on the fly. Beddington two, 16¾lb., 22½lb., lost another. All fresh-run, two had sea-lice on them. Not many fish seen until the evening, when a good many were seen in the Carrots.

April 23.—1ft. 10¾in. to 1ft. 9¾in., 51 deg., very clear. Calm, dull, hazy; finer in afternoon and warmer. Hutton three, 18¼lb., 19¼lb., 20½lb., two on the fly; touched one on minnow and rose another, and lost one foul hooked in back. Beddington three, 18¾lb., 19¼lb., 35½lb., lost one, broken owing to mount giving way (this mount was bound with wire above the bead). Sea-lice on three fish, two fresh-run, and one not quite fresh. Not many fish seen.

It will be noticed that our two best days were preceded by a good many fish being seen in the Carrots on the previous evening.

I can give another very good example of fish coming on in the evening, which occurred on April 23, 1917. Milne had fished the top beat in the morning and got two in the Carrots. I had the middle water and did nothing, and Beddington got two in the lower water. Beddington fished the Gorse Bush on his way down, and I fished it again just before lunch, and after lunch Milne fished it for the third time. I went to the lower water in the afternoon and never had a touch, and I was working my way home, feeling rather disappointed and very weary. There is nothing so tiring as a blank day. As we were walking up from the Roaring Rocks we saw a fish move in the Gorse Bush. Now, this catch is not supposed to be a fly-pool, and Woolliams wanted me to try a minnow. I was rather tired, and perhaps a bit cross and contrary, so I said I would give the fly a try first. As the pool had been fished three times blank that day, I felt sure it was a running fish, and was not there when the pool

was fished before, for, as a rule, the Gorse Bush is a free-taking pool. I therefore started well above him, and the very first cast with a 5/0 Lemon Grey I hooked a fish of 23½lb. We soon got the fish on the bank, and I started again at the same spot. With the third cast I got another of 9½lb., and I still had not reached the spot where the fish showed. When at last I reached it, up he came—31 lb.—which, by the way, is the biggest fish we have killed with fly. As soon as he was knocked on the head Woolliams said, "Go on, sir; there is evidently a run of fish coming up." "Woolliams," I replied, "I could not catch another fish to save my life." I was absolutely done up, for these three fish were landed in exactly three-quarters of an hour. I only reached the pool at six o'clock, and I arrived at the house at seven o'clock, and immediately called out, "For goodness' sake someone bring me a chair and a whisky-and-soda." All these fish had sea-lice on them, and I do not think there is the slightest doubt they had only just arrived in the pool.

Running Fish.

Now, it would be ridiculous for me to assert that one cannot catch running fish, for we ourselves have so many instances to the contrary. Most of them have, however, been caught in certain catches —Tinker's Hole, the Gorse Bush, and Birch Grove. None of these pools has what one would call a strong stream, but below each of them there is very strong water, and I think it is more than probable that a salmon, after fighting his way up the heavy stream below, is inclined to rest a bit when he reaches the comparatively slack water above. If a fish is really running, it generally makes a head and tail rise, showing the back-fin, and usually on the slacker side of the river, whereas a resting fish will, if it shows at all, just break the

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water and will more likely than not be in a taking place.

I had a very good example of how "knowing" a water comes in on Feb. 15, 1913. The river was fairly high, 2ft. 9in., but rather coloured. In the morning I fished the top beat with my wife, and I caught a 22lb. fish in Tinker's Hole with the sand-eel on my way down to the luncheon hut, where we met Milne, who had done nothing in the lower water. We then exchanged beats, but I and my wife were no more successful than Milne had been, but we did manage to see a fish in the Roaring Rocks. It began to rain as we were working our way homewards, and my wife said, "It is no good; let us go home and get some tea." "All right," I replied, "you go on; I will just have a few casts in the Gorse Bush, and I shan't be long." While I was fishing the pool I saw two unmistakable "runners" close to the far bank. It was after half-past four and the light was beginning to fail. I turned round to the under-keeper: "Charlie, there's just light to catch one more fish; we will go straight off to Tinker's Hole. Perhaps one of those fish will stop there." We almost ran that half-mile, and when we got there the third cast with the sand-eel hooked him. He immediately made a rush of about 30 yards upstream and came clean out of the water. "Good God, sir; he's as long as the gaff!" It was certainly a big one, and the question was, had we light enough to kill him? I did all I knew to keep him in the pool, but it was of no use; downstream he would go, and once out of the pool it was all strong water. In this part of the river it is shallow on our side and deep under the other bank, and the question was whether I could keep him on our side. If he once got into the deep water under the far bank I should never get him back, for the river is quite 60 yards across there and my line was certain to be drowned in the strong stream. Time after time I walked him back

to our side, but each time he felt the shallow water he gave a great plunge and was off out again, and on each occasion he went twenty yards or so downstream. It was impossible to hold a heavy fish against such strong water. This went on for quite half an hour, and when we got about quarter of a mile below where he was hooked I began to look at a fence which ended in a large tree growing in the water about 30 yards away. It was now or never. I always hold a fish hard, and I had been pulling at this gentleman for all the rod was worth, but now I pulled still harder, and at last Charlie got the gaff into him. "Well, you've bested him, sir." "Charlie, he has very nearly bested me." It was the hardest fight I ever had with a fish and I was completely done, and, notwithstanding the rain and the wet ground, I lay flat on my back for five minutes to recover. It was a fine, fresh-run cock fish with rather a big head, 47¾in. long and 26in. girth. It was almost dark when we got to the house, for I remember we had to strike a match to see the mark on the steel-yard when we weighed him—45¾lb.—the biggest fish we have caught on our water.

When we got in we found that Milne had caught two on the Carrots Flat, 19¾lb. and 29lb., the latter the biggest fish he had ever killed. As he quaintly put it, "There I came home frightfully pleased with myself, and then that brute Hutton comes in and dumps down a great monster, and my fish only looked big enough for a bait for it."

Of course, there is a great amount of luck in salmon-fishing, and especially in catching a big fish, but I maintain that had it not been for my knowledge of the water I should never have caught this fish. If you want to catch salmon you must keep your line in the water and not fish "with your boots," but use your brains to a certain extent. It was an old poacher who gave me the tip about Tinker's Hole: "If ever you see the water rising or

the fish running, go straight off to Tinker's Hole." Well, I have gone " straight off to Tinker's Hole " many a time, but not always so successfully as on this occasion. This day, by the way, is our record for February—four fish (19¾lb., 22lb., 29lb., 45¾lb.), total 116½lb., giving an average of 29lb.

Pattern of the Minnow.

Now I started to write about the pattern of the minnow, but I seem rather to have wandered away from my subject. In high to medium water and in the early spring with fresh-run fish, I really do not think the pattern matters so much; the size is, I think, the main factor. The great thing is to have something they can see. When, however, the water begins to get on the low side and the fish are not quite so fresh as they were, and in clear water, then, I think, the pattern does matter more.

Say, for example, that we had a big eight or ten feet flood in March, and that on the third day the water had gone to 3ft. 6in., but was still rather coloured or almost thick. I should start with a big 4in. Blue and Silver Phantom, or, say, a 3in. Blue and Silver Devon, or a plain silver one. The size of the Phantoms is measured from the tip of the head to the end of the tail, and the measurement of the Devons is of the metal part only. In neither case is the triangle included. If on the next day the river had dropped to, say, 3ft. 3in. and was somewhat clearer, I should use a 3½in. or 3¾in. Phantom or a 2¾in. Devon. I frequently use Hardy's Gudgeon Phantom, which is a very showy bait in coloured water. If, say, on the third day the water had got below 3ft., I should again reduce the size of the bait, and if it was clear enough, I think I should pin my faith on one of Hatton's 2½in. Brown and Silver Devons. I believe I was the first to use this bait on the Wye. I was a bit

down on my luck, and Woolliams said he had got a new minnow he would like me to try; it had been painted by a friend of his. I ran thirteen fish with that particular minnow and landed twelve of them, one of which weighed 4$\frac{3}{4}$lb., so after that Brown and Silver was all the rage.

When the water gets in the neighbourhood of 2ft. and really clear—it is usually much clearer in the spring than later on—and especially in sunshine, I should prefer to use a 2$\frac{1}{4}$in. Brown and Gold Devon, or say a 3in. Brown and Gold Phantom, and the older and more dirty-looking it is the better. When the river got below 2ft. the size would again be reduced to, say, a 2in. Devon; but I should generally use a smaller bait in shallow pools and a larger bait in deep pools, but at this height of water I should always be giving the fly a good chance.

As the season advances I should use smaller baits than in the early part of the year; but it is hard to lay down any hard-and-fast rule. One can only learn by experience, and that is why I think it is so important to keep a record of the pattern, and more particularly of the size.

When the water gets really low one has to be thinking about a change, for the fish then require more tempting. My experience is that one wants to use a less showy bait, and a natural gudgeon or a loach will sometimes move a fish which won't look at anything else. Of late years I have given up using the natural bait, for I find that Wadham's artificial gudgeons and loach phantoms do just as well, and certainly save a great deal of trouble. I have discarded the natural sand-eel altogether. It is a fine showy bait in dirty water, but I found one either failed to hook or lost so many fish with it. I would certainly rather not hook a fish at all, if I am going to lose it, and particularly so if the loss is due to a breakage.

As a guide to beginners I give a list of the principal

baits we have used, and the number of fish caught with each, during the last ten years :—

PHANTOMS.

Blue and Silver	82	Wadham's Gudgeon	8
Brown and Gold	69	Gold	5
Gudgeon	24		

DEVONS.

Brown and Gold	223	Blue and Gold	11
Blue and Silver	167	Gudgeon	9
Brown and Silver	160	Brown and White	7
Silver	48	Gold	6

SPOON 7.

NATURAL BAITS.

Sand-eel	68	Colley	5
Gudgeon	8	Sprat	3

The prawn and worm I will deal with later.

As a matter of curiosity, I have weighed some of the baits we use, as follows :—

Hardy's Ideal Phantom	2¾in.	·42oz.
Hardy's Pioneer Devon	2in.	·41oz.
Hatton's Light Devon	2in.	·23oz.
Wadham's Celluloid Devon	2in.	·15oz.

A 2in. boat-shaped lead weighs about ¾oz., and two 2in. Jardine leads are about the same weight. For medium water fishing with a 2in. Light Devon, the bait, leads, cast and all will weigh about 1oz., and I do not suppose the heaviest we ever use will be quite 2oz. One must not, however, compare these weights with those used in competitions. Our principal weight—namely, the leads—is reeled up to the rod-point before casting, and the bait will, under ordinary circumstances, weigh less than ¼oz. In competitions all the weight is put at the very end of the line, so as to get greater casting power.

Before I leave the question of spinning I should like to emphasise the importance of keeping one's

reel absolutely clean and well oiled. I don't mean that it should be flooded with oil, but that all the working parts should be thoroughly cleaned, say at least two or three times a week, and a few drops of oil put on to each of the working parts, either with the tip of a feather or a small paint-brush. Don't allow a drop of oil to get on to the brake of a "Silex" reel, but put on a little of the grease or lubricant which Hardy's supply for the purpose. It is best put on with the point of a penknife, and be careful when you replace the centre part of the reel to hold back the trigger which works the brake, otherwise all the grease will be scraped off the brake as the reel slips into position. I generally carry some with me in a small snuff-box, as the grease wears off in the course of a day's fishing.

Sooner or later the beginner is sure to get caught on the bottom, but let me impress on him that it is a great mistake to try and get it off by pulling hard at it straight away. Sometimes, if you lift the rod-point and tighten the line, and then, as it were, throw the rod forward to allow the line to go quite slack, the stream will force it off. Try this two or three times before you resort to sterner measures. If Woolliams is out with me, after trying this method first, I always let him get hold of the line, for he is more than skilful in getting minnows off. He pulls gently at the minnow, and if it does not come at once, he walks downstream and tries it at different angles, and sometimes will try from over 50 yards below where the minnow is hooked. Of course, if the minnow comes away it has to be pulled in hand over hand as fast as possible, otherwise it would sink to the bottom and catch again. If the downstream pull is unsuccessful, he then gets well above the spot, and if that is no good he will go down again. It is astonishing what can be done by patience and gentle pulling, though as he says, "It is no good letting me have the line, sir, after you have pulled

hard at it and driven the hooks home." It is very seldom he fails to get a minnow off, provided you have not pulled hard at it first.

If this fails, it is sometimes worth while putting

FIVE FISH, 12lb. TO 17lb., CAUGHT BY DR. C. D. MARSON.

a ring down. Get a thin branch from a willow — there are plenty on the Wye—and bend it into a circle about 8in. in diameter, and fasten the ends with string. Get well above the minnow, pass the ring over the reel, and let it slide down the rod

and on to the line, letting the stream take it down. Be sure that it gets right down on to the minnow, then tighten up the line by holding the rod up, and again throw the rod forward so as to allow the line to go quite slack, and the ring may, or may not, float it off. Try this two or three times, and if this fails let out plenty of line so as to allow the ring to float downstream, and possibly the force of the current will bring it off.

Failing this, there is nothing else but to break, and get as near to the bait as possible, and pull, and sometimes you may even then recover everything. In any case, after you have been fast on the bottom and have been putting so much strain on your line, it is always as well to test your line and to tie it on to the trace again, for the original knot will have been pulled so tight as to become a danger.

It is astonishing how often one gets fast, not in the bottom, but in a minnow or trace which someone else has lost previously, and very often they come away quite easily. The following are a few of our records of this :—

1914. April 14.—Hutton got badly hung up in the Lower Red Bank, and Woolliams eventually recovered it, together with a Phantom Hutton had lost the previous day, and also half-a-dozen yards of line which Woolliams had lost a few days back.

(We all of us kept getting caught in that spot. When the water got low and clear we got the boat down, but could not find any snag or obstruction which was likely to hold a bait.)

1916. Feb. 2.—Hutton caught a kelt, a trout, and Beddington's sand-eel and trace which the latter had lost the day before.

1918. April 28.—Behrens hooked up two lines and leads and one minnow at the same time in the Lower Red Bank.

I suppose one must get a pull at a different angle, and that is why they come away in this manner

after being lost. It is surprising what a very small thing will catch a minnow. We have several stones adorning our mantelpiece which have been hooked up from the bottom. To look at them now, one would say it would be impossible to hook them, but if the hook gets caught in a tiny crack or in a very small hole in a stone, it will hold right enough. I only wish the fish would hold on as well. It is like what frequently happens when one is walking and puts the point of one's stick or umbrella into a small hole, which almost breaks it. We must have caught every imaginable thing when spinning, besides salmon and other fish. Old boots and other discarded raiment—including a pair of corsets, which "played" quite hard—all sorts and varieties of buckets and pots and pans, and also an iron ventilator. I hooked up three eel-traps which we had lost at different times through floods.

Chapter VII.

Prawn-Fishing.

I now come to prawn-fishing, which I consider more difficult than ordinary spinning, probably because I know so little about it. We really do very little prawn-fishing, and perhaps we do not give it a fair chance, for as long as we can catch them with minnow or fly, prawn is "barred," so we really do not try the prawn until the water is getting low and the fish fairly educated. Rightly or wrongly, I think that too much prawning will spoil one's fishing. In the clear water of Norway I have actually seen them run away from a prawn. I once got Halsten to put a prawn over some fish which we could see quite distinctly. The first time the prawn came round they backed away from it. I told him to cast again, and this time they moved away much further. He then cast a third time, and as soon as the prawn appeared they fairly bolted, and we never saw them again. In the same way on the Wye, on more than one occasion I have seen fish jump out of the water when I have put a prawn down the pool.

I do not suppose fishing a prawn down a pool occasionally will do any harm, but if one rod gets a fish with a prawn, the others want to be trying it too, and the result is that each pool will be prawned several times in the day. When the water is getting low and clear I think—though I admit I may be wrong—that this frequent prawning spoils one's fishing and makes the fish so that they will look at nothing.

There is a sort of general idea that the prawn is

SMALL SPRING FISH—MAY, 1917.

Hen 10lb.
Cock, 12½lb.

a very deadly bait. This is not our experience, though again I repeat that perhaps we do not give it a fair chance, but I see no object in using a rather objectionable smelling bait, and certainly a difficult one to mount, when we can catch them by other methods. Altogether in the last ten years, out of a total of 1,436 fish landed, only fifty-two have been caught with the prawn, and most of these were caught in the first few years. In the last four seasons our total catch with prawn was only seven fish altogether, or less than two a year.

Recently I have kept a record of the occasions when I have tried a prawn, and in nine cases out of ten the entry occurs: "Tried a prawn in the Carrots (or the Roaring Rocks); not a touch." It may be that we do not know how to fish it properly, or that for some unknown reason fish do not take it well in our water. I for one should be quite content if I never saw a prawn again, except on the dinner table.

I have been taught to fish it by two different methods. Dear little Fitzgerald, our first keeper, who is now, alas! dead, used to cast it out "like a minnow and let it come very slowly round, just keeping it clear of the bottom," and would reel it up very slowly until the leads and prawn came into sight, and there is no doubt that fish will follow a prawn almost up to the rod-point. In very slack water he used a cork or big float which used to make a "wake" across the water like a water-rat, and I myself once caught two fish in the almost dead water of Lugg's Mouth, fishing with a float.

The other method is to cast the prawn across the stream, but after the cast to keep the rod well up at first, and then gradually let it down with a sink-and-draw motion, working the rod slowly up and down until the point reaches the water, and then reel in slowly as in the other method. I have

found both methods equally effective or, rather, non-effective.

This season I tried a very good prawn-spinning tackle with celluloid fans, made by Haynes, of Cork. The fans are quite invisible in the water, but being of fairly large size, they will really put a spin on the prawn even in slack water. The prawn-spinning tackles I have tried before were utterly useless in the almost dead water in which we have to fish when the river gets low. Anyhow I have caught five fish with it this year when the water was dead low, but I have not tried it very often.

The question is often asked, should you strike when prawn-fishing? This I cannot answer. We generally find that the fish either take or they do not, and if they do there is no question of striking, for they almost pull the rod out of one's hands and absolutely frighten one. I have generally found—and this is, perhaps, the best argument in favour of prawn-fishing—that a fish hooked on a prawn fights like a tiger. Another disadvantage about prawning—at least, according to our experience—is that one loses so many fish, but that may be due to our inexperience and ignorance.

I had rather an interesting experience with prawning this season. There were a lot of fish in the Carrots Hole at the end of April and the water was low and the weather very hot, and we could do no good with them. I always believe in trying experiments, so on April 29 I decided to put a spinning prawn over them. The water dropped during the day from 1ft. 5¼in. to 1ft. 4¾in., and the temperature was 53½deg. I had the usual result—"not a touch." The next day the water dropped from 1ft. 4¼in. to 1ft. 3¾in., temperature 53½deg. wind N.E. Still very fine, but distinctly colder, and I tried again, with the same result. On the following day I had to go home, so had only a short time to fish in the afternoon. The water had dropped to 1ft. 3½in., temperature 53deg., wind

still N.E., but there was no sun. I fished the lower water in the morning, and went to the Carrots in the afternoon. I first tried the fly, then the minnow, and could not get an offer. I then put a worm, or rather a "gob" of worms, down the Hole, with the same result. I had about half an hour left to fish, and as I had one of the previous day's prawns with me ready mounted, I decided to try it again for luck over a biggish fish we had seen on several occasions. He took it like a tiger, and turned out on weighing to be 25lb., with sea-lice on him. It was evident that fresh fish were still coming up, so I soon mounted another prawn, and it was not long before I got hold of another fish, which I lost. My time was then up, and I bitterly regretted that I had wasted so much time with the worm. I went straight back to the house and told Woolliams he had better take Mrs. Beddington up to the Carrots after tea, and get her to try a prawn, as they were evidently on it, and, sure enough, she had a run from a third fish. She, of course, tried it on the following two days when the weather was still dull and cold, but the temperature had dropped to 51deg. Never a touch did she get, though two were caught with the fly in the lower water. On the third day (gauge 1ft. 3in. temperature 53deg., N.E. wind as before, but bright and hot) she caught a nice fish of 19lb. with a spinning prawn in the Roaring Rocks, but no sea-lice on it.

How is one to explain this? The conditions were more or less the same throughout the whole of the time, and yet one day they will take the prawn and another day they will not look at it. I am afraid I do not know enough about it to answer my own question, but this I can say, that, generally speaking, we find at Hampton Bishop that the prawn is anything but a deadly bait.

That is all I have to say about prawning, and perhaps it is too much, for I will own with all humility that I know very little about it.

SPAWNED BEFORE. 26lb. APRIL 15, 1914.

Chapter VIII.

Worm-Fishing.

I now come to worm-fishing, and here, too, I must confess I have had very little experience. The first fish I ever saw caught with a worm was in Norway in a pool below a "Foss" or fall, in a small river in Søndmør. It was impossible to cast a fly, or, if one could have managed to get a fly out, it could not work properly in the eddies and swirling water below the fall. The gaffer, who was an expert worm-fisher, cast the bunch of worms right into the foaming water immediately below the fall, and allowed the bait to travel down with the stream, and he very soon got a fish out. We caught altogether four salmon out of that pool with the worm, and I made a mental note that I would try this method at Hampton Bishop, and on my first attempt, in June, 1911, I succeeded in landing one.

We have not done a great deal of it, for it is only tried as the very last resort, and our total catch with the worm is only thirty-two in the last eight years, six of which were caught by Behrens on Oct. 15, 1911, on a very last day of the season, out of the Lower Red Bank, with the water dead low—gauge 6⅝in. Curiously enough, he was fishing with a fly-rod and a heavy fly-line, which is not the best method of using a worm.

I venture to think that worm-fishing in dead low water is more difficult than prawning, but that may be because I know so little about it. I have

tried it time after time, generally with little success, possibly owing to my incompetence. I must confess that I do not understand what are the conditions when they will take it. We have caught only one fish with the worm in February, but worm-fishing is now barred until May—that is, until the kelts have gone—for on that same day I got hold of a kelt, and the only way to save the fish was to cut the gut and let the poor beast go off with the hook in its gullet. The fish caught in the other months are as follows:—May, one; June, eleven; July, nil; August, one; September, three; and October, ten; so apparently the time of the year has not much to do with it. Nor do our records of height of water and of temperature give any help, so presumably it is similar to our experience with the prawn—they either want it or they do not.

I will describe my method of using it, as it may be of some help to those who know less than I do. I use my ordinary spinning rod and a very fine Nottingham line, to the end of which I fasten a swivel, to which is attached about two feet of gut, or of one of the gut substitutes. One loses a good deal of tackle, so it is as well not to use anything very expensive, provided it is strong enough; but one word of warning. Do not put too much trust in these substitutes; they are all right, perhaps, for a few days, and then they may let you down badly. They seem to lose their strength all of a sudden. However, they are cheap enough, so it is not a very serious matter to put on a new length each time one goes out worming. I use two hooks, a tip given me by my friend Butler. They are mounted on each end of a short piece of gut, which is doubled back, and the loop thus formed is attached to the cast.

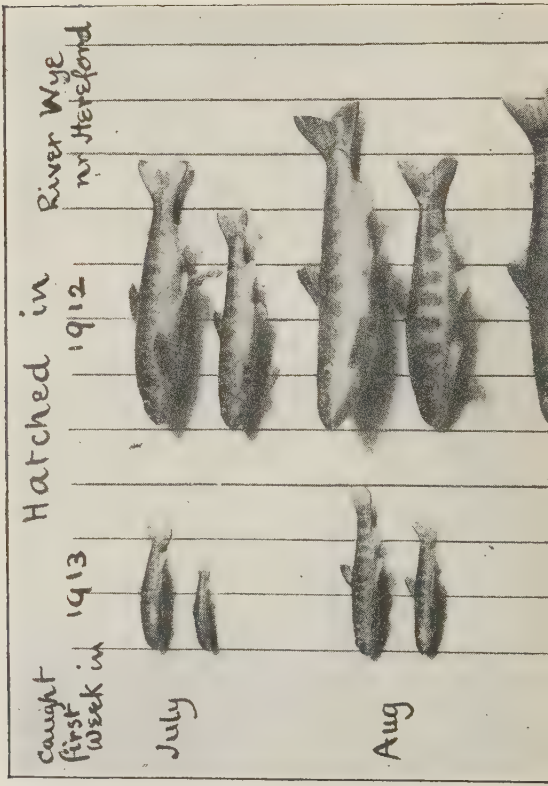
The great advantage of using two hooks is that it keeps the worms more apart, and they open out more in the water. If you only use one hook, the worms soon get into a clogged mass, and do not

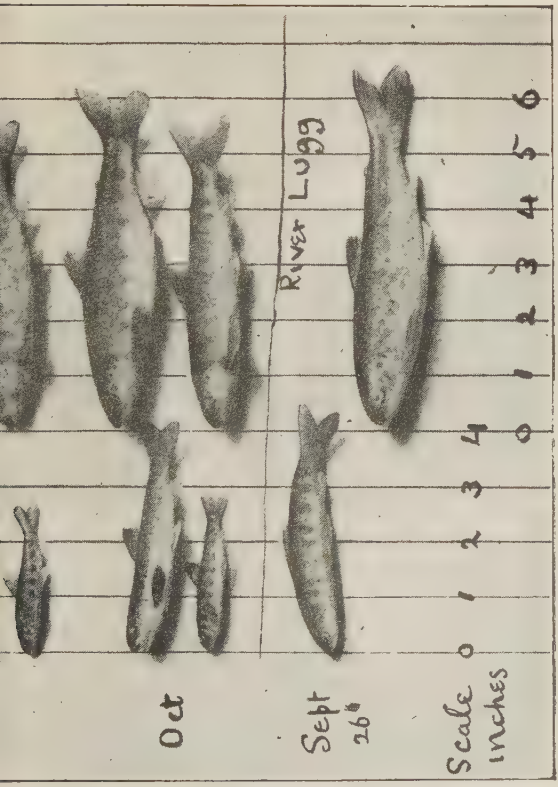
look nearly so attractive as with the double mount. I also fasten a piece of moderately thick, soft copper wire to the swivel, leaving an end projecting about an inch long, and for leads I use small pierced bullets. It is a very simple matter to put one, two, or more bullets on to the wire, and by bending the end round they will not slip off. It is generally the lead that catches, and with a good pull the wire will straighten and you recover your hooks. Of course, you lose the leads, but that is a small matter. Ernest Lees, who used to fish a good deal in Norway with the prawn, gave me this tip, and he told me that his friends used to chaff him and say that one of the pools in the Lærdal river was "paved" with his bullets.

I use good-sized lobworms, and I like to have them well toughened so as to stand the casting. I sometimes put two worms on one hook and one on the other, or, perhaps, two on each. A good deal depends on the height and the colour of the water. The great thing, as Butler says, is to have as many "ends" as possible.

I always cast from the reel, taking as large a circle as possible, so that one does not need to force the cast in the least, as that would be fatal to the worms. Even as it is they sometimes get a bit "tired," and one has to put on fresh worms. I find that about a 15 to 20 yard cast is as much as I can manage, but if you can get near to your work, that is sufficient.

If the stream is strong and the water fairly deep, I should cast across at right angles, or even up-stream, so as to give the bait plenty of time to sink. In slacker or shallower waters this is not necessary. As the bait comes down towards me I gather up the loose line *in my hand*, just keeping in touch with the bait, and when it has passed me I gradually release this loose line, and when it has all run out I sometimes take the brake off the reel and allow the bait to run out the line. What I try


Caught first week in 1913
Hatched in 1912
River Wye nr Hereford
July
Aug


Oct
Sept
26th
River Lugg
Scale
inches
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

to do is to allow the worms to swim down naturally without any check, and I like to feel my lead bumping on the stones and gravel on the bottom. It does not do to lose touch with the bait or to have too much slack line, otherwise the hooks will catch on the bottom, which often means good-bye to the leads, cast, hooks and all.

It is a most fascinating form of fishing, and it has certainly taught me a great deal about the bottom of the river, especially as I generally try it in dead low water, when one only requires very little lead. Consequently you can feel the least touch, and it is a most extraordinary sensation when a fish takes you. I suppose one's fingers acquire great sensitiveness, and I have often felt a salmon pick up the worms and drop them again, and then pick them up again, perhaps again to let go. If a fish does get hold I believe it is best to give it plenty of time. Get a little below the fish so as to put as slight a strain on the line as possible; otherwise it may drop the bait. That is where a fine line comes in, as it offers less resistance to the stream. Wait until the fish moves off with it, and then you can let him have it.

It may not be a very refined form of fishing, but salmon can certainly be caught in this way, when no other method is of any use. Using it as we do when the water is dead low, and when everything else is hopeless, it does at any rate provide one with some amusement, when you have nothing else to do.

As I said before, I do not pretend to know anything about worm-fishing, and I can only hope that the above notes may be of some slight assistance to anyone who cares to try it, when he is waiting for a flood to bring up some fresh fish to take the place of the old friends whom he has got to know by sight, and to whom he has probably already shown a considerable variety of flies, minnows, etc.

Chapter IX.

Weighing Fish.

We used to have a good many disputes about the weight of fish, and we found that there was great irregularity in the ordinary spring-balance. Two might weigh alike at 10lb., and at 20lb. differ as much as half a pound to a pound. In order to put a stop to this trouble I got a steel-yard, by which one, of course, obtains really accurate weights. We can weigh any fish on this up to 60lb. correctly to an ounce, and it will turn at half an ounce.

If a fish pulls, for example, exactly 21lb. 8oz., it is recorded as a 21½lb. fish; if it weighs, say, 21 lb. 9oz. or more up to 21 lb. 12oz., we call it a 21¾lb. fish; and I am sure this small allowance is sufficient to cover any possible loss in weight. I know it is very tempting to make one's fish heavier than it really is; but what is the good of cheating oneself? If one is taking records for scientific purposes, inaccurate weights are useless.

No weights are recorded except what the fish pulls when it is brought to the house, and I think it would be a good thing if anglers generally were more accurate in weighing their fish. I know it is a frequent practice to add from half a pound to a pound to the actual weight to make up so-called "loss of weight."

We have, however, some very interesting figures showing what a salmon actually does lose. On April 26, 1913, I caught a fish which weighed at 2 p.m., within a few minutes of its capture, exactly 20lb. 13oz. On the following day at 9 a.m.

its weight was 20lb. 9½oz., showing a loss of 3½oz. It was again weighed for the third time at 8.30 a.m. on the 28th as 20lb. 7½oz., showing a further loss of 2oz., or altogether 5½oz. in forty-two and a half hours, or about 2 per cent. This loss is very small, and certainly less than I expected.

Again, on February 23, 1918, a fish was landed at five o'clock which weighed shortly afterwards 22lb. 12oz. Like the preceding fish it was caught on a Saturday and could not be sent away, and so had to be kept over the Sunday. It was reweighed on Monday morning as 22lb. 7oz., showing a loss of 5oz., or 1½ per cent. in forty-four hours.

I have, however, another instance. I arranged with the Food Controller at Hereford to sell some salmon at considerably less than the market price, provided they were sold for local consumption at very much lower prices than those fixed by the Government, which, to my thinking, allowed far too much profit to the retailer. It was arranged that the salmon should be sold through the local fishmongers, and I felt a good deal of indignation when one of the latter questioned our weights, which in each case were put at a quarter of a pound less than the actual weight. I told him he had better come to Colcombe and see the next lot of fish reweighed. This he did, and I took the opportunity of recording the loss in weight. Four fish caught on April 20 were *recorded* as 65lb. The weight on April 22 was 63lb. 12oz., showing a loss in forty-eight hours of 20oz., or about 2 per cent. Four other fish caught on April 21 were *recorded* as 82¾lb. The actual weight on the following day was exactly 82lb., showing a loss of 12oz. in twenty-four hours, or slightly under 1 per cent. In each case the loss was really less than this, for, as I explained before, our *recorded weights* may in some cases be slightly over the actual weight.

I think one can take it that, at any rate in the spring, a salmon will not lose more than 1 to 1½ per

cent. in the first twenty-four hours, and a further 1 per cent. in the following twenty-four hours. As most fish are weighed within twenty-four hours of being caught, it is evident that in the spring they would not lose more than 1½ per cent., if so much, which amounts to about 5oz. on a 20lb. fish. I think, therefore, that the addition of half a pound or a pound to the actual weight to make up for "loss" is far too much, and in this way many anglers are deliberately cheating themselves, and for no useful purpose. Possibly in the summer the loss may be more, but I have no records of this.

Chapter X.

Improving a Fishery.

I stated before that it by no means follows, because one has a mile or more on a celebrated river, that one therefore has a good salmon fishery, where plenty of fish can be caught. It may be that there is nothing but sluggish water, and in that case it would be difficult, and probably a very expensive matter, to improve it. Or, possibly, there may be a fair amount of stream, but the water may be too shallow, or there may be no "comfortable" places for salmon to lie in. I take it that what constitutes a good salmon fishery is a length of water with suitable streams and with plenty of places where salmon like to stop for a time on their journey up-country. If they don't stop in your water you can't expect to catch them.

It is very curious how generation after generation of salmon year after year settle down in exactly the same spots, some of which may be only a few square yards in extent. It is more than probable—indeed, almost a certainty—that very few of these fish have ever seen these places before, when they were living in the river as parr, or on their downward journey to the sea as smolts. Even if they had, I doubt whether they would remember them, for the salmon is rather a stupid beast. I often say if they had half the brains of a chub we should never land one.

I take it what happens is that when a fish is running up a river he begins to feel tired and wants a rest, and when he gets into a pool which takes his fancy, or seems to be a comfortable sort

of place to stop in, he further looks around until he finds the most comfortable place of all—just like a dog turning round and round to try and find the softest spot on the hearthstone. If this be so, it stands to reason that the more comfortable pools and "soft spots" you have in your water, the more salmon will stop there, and the more chances you will have of catching fish, especially so if there is a nice stream to enable you to present your fly or minnow to the fish in a tempting manner.

The question is, can you do anything either to make such "soft spots" or to increase the number of those you have? I have not the least desire to pose as an expert, especially as my experience is limited to one beat. It stands to reason that different waters will require different treatment. All I can do is to give a short account of what we have tried to do on our water, and I can only hope that this may be of some assistance to others who are thinking of trying to improve their water. Let me say, straight away, some of our work has been successful, but many of our experiments so far have been absolute failures.

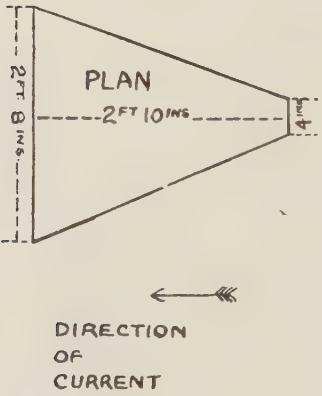
I must, however, first give a few words of caution. Think two or three times or more before you do anything, and in any case it is best to go slowly and tentatively in the matter, and even to take two or three years in completing any contemplated operations. A heavy flood coming down a river is enormously powerful, and can do an immense amount of damage, and anything you put in its way may produce results which you neither wanted nor expected. A big "croy" was erected on the Wye, which washed away half an acre of valuable agricultural land, which had to be paid for. In the same way, weeds will hold a gravel bed together, and if you cut the weeds the whole of the bed may be washed away and may be deposited in a good pool lower down, or may change the run of the

stream in a pool above or below. In any case leave well alone. If you have a first-class pool do not go and spoil it.

Cement Blocks.

I will deal first with the attempts we have made to make "soft spots" or lies for the fish. In most of our water the bottom consists of hard-set gravel, almost as smooth as a billiard-table, which, of course, provides excellent wading, but not very comfortable lies for the fish if there is a strong stream. In several of these we have put in triangular cement blocks, of which I give a sketch with dimensions. It will be noticed that the block is set with its point upstream, and that it sloped upwards slightly from the point to the back. It is advisable to put them in when the water is dead low, so that you can get them exactly in the position you want. The reason we make them of cement is because we have no local stone. They are made in triangular wooden moulds, of which the back end can be removed when the cement has set, and the two sides then come away easily. The cement is made of rough river sand in the proportion of one of cement to six parts of sand. We put them into the river with an ordinary fishing punt.

During the last few years we have put in altogether 128 of these blocks; some have been successful, others apparently so far are of no use. One pool we call the Blocks. It is only the tail of a smooth glide and never used to hold a fish. These are the sort of places in which to try experiments. On July 20, 1912, we put three blocks in this little spot as an experiment, and on Sept. 3 in the same year a fish of 35lb. was caught here from behind one of the blocks. We afterwards put in four more blocks, and the following fish have since been caught in this small catch:—1913, three; 1914, nil; 1915, four; 1916, two; 1917, five. In this way we have made quite a nice little catch out of what was


PLAN
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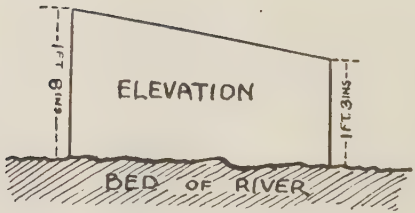

ELEVATION
1FT 8 INS.
1FT 3 INS.
BED OF RIVER

previously useless water. They have also been very successful in the Lower Red Bank.

The one disadvantage is that you occasionally get caught in them when spinning, and on two occasions I have been broken by the fish getting the line round a block. One, however, can put up with these occasional mishaps if it results in more fish stopping in one's water. The salmon, by the way, lie *behind* the blocks and not in front of them. Once when the water was low and clear I saw two salmon lying side by side behind one block, just below each of the back corners.

I am afraid they would not be of much use in a river with a shifting gravel bed, as they would soon get silted up or buried altogether. Occasionally, when the water is low and clear, we go over them and lift those that have got silted up, and straighten others that have turned round, and sometimes we alter the position of those that seem to be badly placed.

"Croys."

Most salmon-fishermen will have noticed that a small rock or point jutting out into the water produces a swirl with quiet water or a back eddy behind it close to the bank, and that fish will lie in such spots a few yards below the point just on the edge of the slack water. We have tried to create such "soft spots" by constructing small "croys," made either of piles driven into the bottom, bags of cement, or, when we can get them, of rough stones. They are quite small erections and, as a rule, do not project more than 1½ to 2 yards from the bank. I cannot say that they have been very successful, though a fair number of fish have been caught behind some of them. One we put in the Gorse Bush produced a very good fish on March 6, 1915. There had been a big flood and none of us were down at Hampton Bishop. The water was very high (3ft. 6in.) but clearing, and Woolliams boldly faced the very unfavourable conditions.

Just behind this croy he hooked a fine fish of 38½lb., and as he was alone it was no easy matter to land it, for, as I mentioned before, if a fish gets below the fence in the Gorse Bush you may have a bad time if it takes you down round the dangerous fence which runs up to the edge of the Roaring Rocks. At this height of the river this fence would be under water, and after a flood it is usually covered with snags brought down by the river. Three times he walked it up the pool and three times it took him down again, and the last time it was getting half-cooked and he had to follow it down, but by good luck or good management he managed to bring it close to the bank just at the very head of the Roaring Rocks, and it walloped over the wall there into the quiet water, and in that spot he gaffed it. I do not like to think what might have happened if the fish had gone further down and if the line had caught in the fence below.

We owe the idea of these croys to Mr. H. W. Johnston, one of the discoverers of the age of fish from scale science, and anyone who thinks of trying experiments should read an excellent article of his on the subject "Croys on Salmon Rivers" (*Baily's Magazine*, May, 1908).

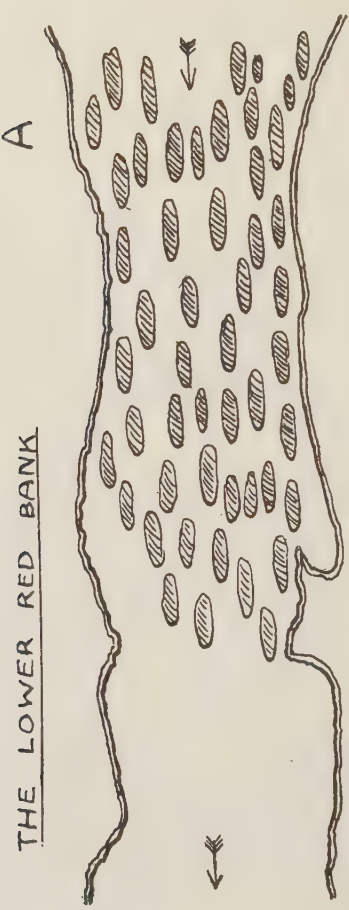
Chapter XI.

Weed-Cutting.

I now come to the question of weed-cutting. In addition to providing a channel for running fish, one can do wonders in diverting the stream by judicious cutting. The late spring and summer fishing in the Nook, the Farm, and Lyddiatt's depends almost entirely on a channel cut through the weeds, and unless we kept the weeds cut neither the Roaring Rocks nor the Black Hole would give us much fishing after May. The Lower Red Bank was originally "made" by cutting a channel through the weeds, but this I will deal with separately.

We usually cut the weeds when the water is quite low, and we find the best plan is to wade in and cut them by hand with bill-hooks. We have tried various patent weed-cutters, and however successful they may have been on other rivers, they are of not the least use on our water. On a fine hot day in June or July weed-cutting is, perhaps, rather arduous work, but it is, at any rate, good exercise. Of course, it is not fair to the fisheries below to cut weeds when the water is at fishing level. However, they cannot be cut easily until the river gets really low, and then one can do it with an easy conscience, for under those conditions there will be little or no fishing for anybody.

From the accompanying plan of the Lower Red Bank it will be seen that originally the weeds extended right across the river and that the stream trickled through in a number of small rivulets. Below this there is about three-quarters of a mile


A
THE LOWER RED BANK
WEEDS
IN THE ORIGINAL STATE—1908

of deep dead water, which always held fish. It was evident that if we could make a good stream here it ought to make a first-class catch, for fish would always be creeping up into the stream from the store-house below. Our first experiment was to cut a straight channel about 15 yards wide through the weeds. The result was all that could be desired, for the stream, instead of frittering itself away all over the place in numerous rivulets, was now concentrated in one good straight strong stream, and the Lower Red Bank became our best fly catch. All we had to do afterwards was to keep the channel clear.

Then came that terribly dry summer of 1911. All the weeds on our bank—the shallow side—were left high and dry when the water dropped to *two inches* on our gauge, and eventually they died. The result was that the winter floods swept away the whole of the gravel. In the spring of 1912 we could not make out what had gone wrong with the Lower Red Bank, and it was not until the water got low that we discovered what had happened. We then started to experiment very tentatively. We first put in a row of bags filled with gravel in the position now occupied by the middle croy, and when we found they worked all right and concentrated the stream to a certain extent, we eventually replaced them with bags of cement. In the following season we laid another row of cement bags on the top of the first lot, which were, of course, only about ten inches above the bed of the river. This was rather better, but the stream still did not carry down far enough. During the next season we put in the lowest croy. This was a further improvement, but even then the stream was not as good as formerly. Finally, we put in another croy above the first one, and we put an end on to the middle croy, so as to keep the stream as straight as possible. Altogether we spent six seasons in tentative work and gradual improvements, and

THE LOWER RED BANK
B
WEEDS
AFTER WEED-CUTTING-1909-10

C
THE LOWER RED BANK
WEEDS
CROYS
CEMENT BLOCKS
IN THE COMPLETED STATE - 1918

to-day the stream is as good as, if not better than, it was before. In addition, we have put in a number of cement blocks. The reason why we have devoted all this time and labour to the work is because this pool is far and away our best fly catch, for out of 450 fish caught with fly, 147 have come from the Lower Red Bank, the two next best fly pools being the Roaring Rocks and the Black Hole with 79 and 78 respectively, leaving 146 to be divided among sixteen other catches.

There are numerous other experiments we have tried, one of which, at the Upper Red Bank, has been a great success, but it would take too long to describe them all.

I should, however, mention that rough stone is a much more satisfactory material than cement bags for building croys, as the latter are more easily washed away by floods.

Chapter XII.

Pollution.

I hope it will not be imagined from my unfortunate experience this year, which I allude to later, that the Wye is a polluted river; on the contrary, it will, I think, compare very favourably with the majority of big rivers in this country. I do not think the Hereford Town Council manage their sewage works in the best possible manner, but otherwise there is no pollution in the Wye worth speaking about. The effluent from the munition works at Hereford is exceedingly well managed, and the Admiralty have definitely promised to do all that we have asked for at the new shipbuilding works at Chepstow at the mouth of the river, so I think we have nothing to fear at present. Let us hope that when the new Ministry of Fisheries is constituted they will have powers to deal with pollution, otherwise it is a bad look-out for many of our inland fisheries.

The worst thing about the Wye is the thick sediment which comes down with every flood. It is bad enough for us, but is still worse below Lugg's mouth, for that tributary takes a long time to clear, and then again below Monmouth, the Monnow and the Trothy also add to the thick water. However, nothing that we can do will prevent this, but it certainly is a great disadvantage that after every big flood several days must elapse before the water is clear enough for fishing. Of course, the upper waters suffer the least and the lower waters the most. Formerly I used to sit a flood out. Now I go home; for while you are watching a flood falling and clearing, another one may come down before the water is fishable.

When the water does drop in the spring the Wye

is then at its clearest, for sheep-washing begins about the middle of May, and during the summer cattle are standing in the water through miles of country, and they certainly do not add to the purity of the river. Then in June, in the middle and lower waters, the bottom "breaks." Of these three disadvantages the sheep-washing is the worst, for it puts the fish clean off. We had a good example of this in May, 1910. Fresh fish were continually running up, and on every single day from the 9th to the 20th we caught fish with sea-lice on them. On the 21st the river had dropped to 1ft. 6in., a height at which fresh fish can still reach us, but on that day the water came down dirty from sheep-washing, and we never caught another fish until June 4, after a small fresh which came down on the previous day and cleared the dirt away. I am afraid we cannot help it, for, like the poor, the sheep are always with us.

Weeds are also rather troublesome, and especially after a series of mild winters. We have had far less weeds during the last two seasons owing to the severe weather during the last winter but one. The only weed that matters much is the water crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*), and I have seen stretches of the river full of a mass of "sudd" from bank to bank. It is certainly a beautiful sight when it is in flower, for it gives the appearance of fields of snow floating on the water. In some parts of the river it must completely stop the fish running up when the water is at all low, and I think every owner ought to be compelled to keep a channel cut through his water. I personally thoroughly enjoy a day's weed-cutting, and, as I mentioned before, one can improve one's fishing by judicious cutting. Let us also not forget that weeds mean an enormous amount of food for the fry. I generally find after weed-cutting that my arms and my waders are covered with all sorts of creeping and crawling things.

Chapter XIII.

Extraordinary Incidents.

Fishermen are generally supposed to have a very slight regard for the truth, but I often say that there is really no need to tell lies about fishing, for such extraordinary things do happen, and it is wonderful in what remarkable ways salmon can be caught. Ernest Lees once told me of an extraordinary experience he had in Norway. He hooked a biggish fish with the fly, and, after playing him for about ten minutes, the cast got cut on a rock, and away the fish went. The day was coming to an end and his carriole was due in half an hour, so there was no time to soak a fresh cast. In order to pass the time he immediately started fishing with his spinning-rod, on which was a prawn ready mounted. At the third cast he hooked a fish, and when it was landed there was his fly in its mouth with part of the cast which he had just lost. As he told me, not five minutes had elapsed between the losing of the fish and the rehooking of it. He thought the incident was rather out of the way, so he sent an account of it to the *Field*, and shortly after he received a postcard from a friend, on which was written, "I am a bit of a liar myself." I believe Lees to be a truthful man, but I can vouch for the truth of the following incidents which have happened at Hampton Bishop.

On March 1, 1917, Woolliams landed a fish at the Roaring Rocks with a triangle in its mouth and a short piece of gut attached to it, which looked as if it had come from a mount for a gudgeon. There was not a spot of rust on the hook, which was

A FINE MARCH FISH.

Hen, 34lb.; length 38 inches; girth 21 inches. March, 1917.

bright metal and not bronzed, and therefore a very short time must have elapsed since the fish broke away from someone who was fishing either above or below us.

On May 29, 1908, I hooked a 27½lb. fish on the Carrots Flat with a prawn which was landed in less than a minute. Fitzgerald was standing close by teaching me how to use a prawn. The fish did not seem to know it was hooked, and I reeled it straight in to the bank, and Fitzgerald just put the gaff into it. It was the prettiest-shaped hen fish I ever caught (length 40in., girth 22in.).

In 1911, on April 10, I was fishing in the Lower Red Bank with a prawn, and I got fast, as I thought, on the bottom. I pulled at it and pulled at it, and I called out to Lees, who was on the bank, that I never knew there was any obstruction there to catch one's bait. I then waded about ten yards upstream to get a pull at a different angle, and all of a sudden the bottom began to move away, and eventually proved to be a 24lb. cock fish, hooked in the very tip of his nose. Lees always chaffed me about it, and said I was a nice sort of person to pretend to be a fisherman and not to know the difference between a salmon and the bottom of the river. I believe it was this incident which led to the relation of his experience.

On April 6, 1912, I was fishing in the Roaring Rocks and hooked a fish which came in like a lamb, and I called out to Woolliams that I had hold of another confounded kelt. All of a sudden it discovered there was something wrong, and it went mad, and finally jumped on to the bank, and Woolliams promptly put the gaff into it. "I thought it had broken the line, sir; that was why I gaffed it." It was only a small fish of 13¾lb., but the whole incident did not take more than two minutes.

In the next story—not a fairy story—Woolliams was the hero. On May 28, 1913, he hooked a fish

of 17½lb. in the Carrots, and when he landed it found that it was held by a half-hitch of the spinning line round its tail, and the leads, cast, and minnow had disappeared, but the hook was still in its mouth. It must have got the line round its tail, and then the leads must have caught in a stone and broken away from the hook, and the line and the minnow, of course, dropped off.

Milne once had a great piece of luck. He was fishing Birch Grove, where they had seen a fish move on the far side, about our longest cast, which I do not pretend to be able to manage. After trying two or three minnows, he said to Woolliams, "Oh, this is no use! Let us go off to the Black Hole." As he told me afterwards, "I just made a sort of cast anyhow, and as I was reeling in fairly fast to get done with it, I saw a great wave following my minnow half across the river, and then I was into him." When we got him on the steel-yard he weighed 42lb., and, curiously enough, on the very next day, March 2, 1914, another fish of exactly the same weight was hooked in the very same spot by a clergyman, who was fishing from the other bank, which belongs to the Holme Lacy water.

On March 10, 1915, the most extraordinary incident of all happened. I sent an account of it shortly afterwards to the *Fishing Gazette*, but I think it is worth repeating. I had a bad day, getting nothing, but Beddington quite put me in the shade. He started with a fresh-run 20lb. fish in the Gorse Bush, and followed it up with one of 21 lb. in Birch Grove. After lunch he went to the Lower Red Bank, and eventually got a real bad hang up. He tried it all ways, and finally put a ring down to try and release the minnow. This was of no use, so at last he decided to break. He started pulling the line in hand over hand, and had several yards on the bank, but luckily Charlie was holding the rod. After a tug-of-war—a good line properly tied on takes a good deal of breaking—the minnow came

away and naturally rose to the surface, and immediately a salmon came up and took it right on top of the water. There he was, playing a salmon with a hand-line like a cod, with yards of loose line round his feet and everywhere. Charlie reeled up like mad, and after the exercise of considerable skill they got the line clear and he was able to play the fish with the rod. Even then their troubles were not over, for the ring had come away too and was swinging on the line between him and the salmon. As is usually the case in that pool, the fish went across under the other bank, and the ring was carried down by the strong stream and put a horrible belly on the line. He then got well above the salmon and succeeded in getting the ring down to the far end of the line, but as soon as it touched the salmon's nose off he went upstream, and there was the belly in the line again. This was repeated several times, and at last in its struggles the fish drove his head and shoulders through the ring right up to its back fin. This was worse than ever, for the ring carried the cast back with it, so he was now pulling at the middle of the fish, and the stream, of course, worked it about like an otter. To cut matters short it was eventually gaffed—a fine cock fish of 26¼lb. with sea-lice on it. The whole story sounded rather like a horrible nightmare. I once hooked a very big salmon—in my dreams—and he came charging out of the water at me, and I woke with fright.

On April 4, 1916, Woolliams had plenty of excitement. He started by hooking a 21¼lb. fish in the Carrots Hole by the tail. Away the fish went upstream like an express train through the Carrots Run just above the Hole—a very strong stream—and right up to the top of the Flat, a distance of over 100 yards. He followed it as quickly as possible, and eventually it came back to the Hole where he gaffed it, and immediately it came out of the water the hook dropped out. Not content with

this, later in the day he crossed over to the other bank and hooked a 24½lb. salmon in Lyddiatts. It made a big run downstream and jammed the check of the reel, and then most considerately kept quiet while he took the reel to bits and removed the check. Very shortly afterwards he was able to gaff the fish.

Three days later Behrens got hung up in the Carrots Hole, and eventually, by pulling at the line with his hand, he got the minnow off, and while he was pulling the line in as quickly as possible a 16½lb. fish came and seized the minnow. He had yards of loose line on the bank by his feet, but Charlie was again holding the rod, and they eventually between them got the line on to the reel, and the fish was killed with the rod. Luckily there was no ring to complicate matters. The extraordinary part of this episode was the fact that when the minnow came away Behrens was standing about 30 yards below it, and consequently when the fish took it he was pulling the line and the minnow *downstream*.

Again, in the same year, on May 22, I was fishing the Lower Red Bank with a spoon and caught on the bottom. I tried first getting well upstream, but the bait would not come away. I then waded downstream to pull at a different angle, reeling in the slack line as I went down. Just when I was opposite the spot where the spoon was caught, it came away, and I started reeling in fast to keep it off the bottom. When about half the line had come in, a small fish of 9¾lb. seized the spoon, which must have been travelling pretty fast. He was soon landed. Moral: In very clear water try an occasional cast at right angles and work your bait across the stream as fast as possible.

The next incident I have recorded happened to Mrs. Beddington on June 6, 1917. She was fishing in the Carrots Hole and hooked a small 10lb. fish. It was one of those mad little devils which I

mentioned before, and danced about all over the place—sometimes in the water, sometimes out of it. All of a sudden Woolliams called out to her, "Look out, mum; it's hooked by the tail," but when it was on the bank they discovered what had happened. The fish had taken the minnow in the orthodox fashion, but in its struggles it had got the reel line caught round its tail, and in its further antics had produced a regular tangle of line, leads, and wire trace all mixed up together. The wire had snapped and the minnow had dropped off, but the triangle was still in its mouth with one of the hooks broken off. All that held it was the tangle of line and wire round its tail.

I now come to the present season 1918, and have still two more incidents to record. On April 24 the water unexpectedly cleared, and as none of us were down, Woolliams had to fish alone, and had a glorious day. He started by catching three fish in the Carrots Hole in the morning with a 2in. Brown and Gold Devon—19¾lb., 19½lb., and 18¾lb. He got another, 20¼lb., in the afternoon in the Lower Red Bank with the same minnow. He fished the Carrots again in the evening and got one of 20lb. in the Hole, also with the Brown and Gold, and ended up with a 21¼lb. fish on the Carrots Flat caught on a Brown and Silver Devon. Six fish, weighing 119½lb., in one day ought to satisfy most people, but that was not all of it. Shortly after hooking the fish in the Lower Red Bank *both* the handles of his Nottingham reel came off, and it required considerable ingenuity to land the fish with a reel without handles—another nightmare—as bad as playing billiards with "elliptical billiard balls." He telephoned to me at Alderley Edge that night, and I caught the first train in the morning, only to find the river in a shocking state, thick and smelling horribly. A cesspool had burst a few miles up the river. Of course, the fish would look at nothing. We, however, made up for it

afterwards, for on the following day I caught five fish, 94½lb., and Behrens, who came by the later train, got one of 15½lb.; and on the day after we got another six weighing 122½lb. I should mention that one of the fish I caught (23lb.) managed to smash the mount just above the bead—again one of those mounts, which I mentioned before, bound with wire. Luckily the silk wrapping held on to the triangle, and by that the fish was landed. I am glad I did not know what had happened until the fish was landed, for I might have put very little strain on him and so have lost him.

I once hooked a kelt, and never had the hook in him. As soon as I felt the fish he went off downstream like the proverbial lightning, and I thought I was into a big fish, but he soon gave in, and we saw at once that it was a kelt hooked by the tail. I told Woolliams to be careful how he tailed him, or he might get the hook into his hand. When we came to land him, we discovered that he must have struck at the minnow but missed the hook, and the minnow must have flown round and caught in the trace, and so made a loop round his tail, by which it was landed. It has happened to me twice with trout, but never before with salmon; but what is most remarkable is that such a thing could happen with a wire trace.

There is one member of our party who has had no excitements of this sort—namely, my wife—but she has done what no one else has done on our water She has caught the only "marked" fish. On May 24, 1917, in the Carrots Hole, she caught a 9lb. fish which was marked as a smolt in the spring of 1915, and the mark was not discovered until the evening, when the fish was placed on the measuring board to have his length and girth recorded. These smolt-marks are very small and are easily missed, and I always make a practice of running my fingers along the front of the back fin of every fish I handle. A mark might

have "grown into" the fish, and would easily escape one's notice. I, however, gave Woolliams the usual reward which I offer for every "marked" fish caught on the Wye. My wife covered herself with more glory by landing a 27½lb. salmon half an hour afterwards, hooked in the back fin. I did not see the fight, but they told me that it was a heroic battle, which I can well imagine.

Killing Kelts.

We have two instances of kelts being caught which had recently been gaffed by mistake by someone else and returned to the water. In both cases a very short time must have elapsed before they were rehooked, for blood was still oozing from the gaff-mark. I am not one of those who think the kelt is of no use, and especially after what I have seen this season. We have caught an exceptionally large number of salmon which had spawned before, and which went down to the sea as kelts early in 1917, and some of them were the best-shaped fish we have had this year. On April 6 and April 7, out of ten fish landed four had spawned before.

The following are their weights and measurements:—

Weight.	Length.	Girth.
19lb.	35½in.	19in.
21¾lb.	38in.	19¾in.
24lb.	38½in.	21in.
25½lb.	39½in.	21½in.

Of course, if the country were really starving there might be some excuse for killing the kelts, but we have not reached that stage yet, and let us hope we never shall. They are poor eating at the best, but if we handle them gently and return them to the river, at any rate some of them will be caught again as fresh fish. As kelts they are almost worthless for eating, but when they come back to

the river again they have will doubled, or even trebled, in weight, and they will be valuable food, though not so good as a maiden fish. To show how rapidly they can increase in weight, I may mention that on Feb. 27, 1914, I caught a kelt weighing 8lb., and I adorned her adipose fin with a silver label—" No. 4,632, Ireland." This fish was recaptured on May 10, 1915, in one of the Severn nets, and then weighed 28lb. My label was still there, so there was no doubt about its being the same fish. Here we have a case of a fish feeding itself up from 8lb. to 28lb., an increase of 20lb. in slightly over a year. When it was recaptured it would be worth about £3, but as a kelt it would not be worth as many shillings. Personally, except in case of dire necessity, I consider it both wicked and wasteful to kill kelts.

Now this concludes my list of remarkable incidents. Of course, there have been plenty of other minor excitements, but they would probably not be of much interest to others than ourselves. If, however, on one single beat on the Wye, all these various curious incidents can occur in eleven seasons, it is evident that there is not the slightest necessity for fishermen to stray from the truth.

I have now come to the end of my subject, and I can only hope that this paper may be of some use, at any rate to inexperienced anglers. I do not pretend to be an expert, but I am only too glad to help others, if I can, and to tell anybody what little I know. I also hope that Mr. Marston will feel that I have done my best to redeem that promise which I so rashly gave him a few months ago.

APPENDIX.

1. General Observations.

The other day I received a letter from my friend, Mr. Marston, saying that he had no copies left of "Rod Fishing on the Wye," and that he thought of reprinting it, if I could revise it so as to bring it up-to-date. It was naturally a pleasure to know that this little book has been a good seller, but, when I read through it again, I found that to bring it really up-to-date would mean re-writing almost the whole of it. A lot of water has flowed under Wye Bridge since September, 1918, and I have learnt, or at least I hope I have learnt, a good deal since then. The more I fish the more I realise how much there is to be learnt and how little I know. There is one point I always try to impress on young beginners. Don't be carried away by the cock-suredness of youth and think you know everything. I myself am always glad to take a hint from anyone, even if I think he is a worse fisherman than myself. I may be getting rather an old dog to learn new tricks, but there is the other proverb about never being too old to learn. Anyhow, if anyone will give me a tip or a hint about anything to do with fishing, I am grateful, and in the same way I am always glad to do what I can to help those *who are willing to learn*.

As re-writing that little book is at present quite out of the question, I thought that the simplest plan would be to write an appendix, in which I could add to what had previously been printed. At the same time let me state frankly that most of my

experience of salmon fishing has been limited to one beat of one river. Therefore, probably a good deal of what follows will not apply to other rivers, or even to other beats of the Wye.

It was not until I went through the book to see what alterations might be necessary that I realised that twelve years had elapsed and all the changes those sad years had brought about. Some of my friends have left me and some, alas, have passed away. There is none I miss more than my dear old friend, Ernest Crosfield, from whom I learnt so much. Although he was a far better fisherman than I am, he was always willing to discuss improvements of tackle, or better methods of attack, just as if he knew less than I did. He was one of the most modest of men, and I believe it was a pleasure to him to argue things out with me, or indeed with anyone else. He was not like the man in the old Lancashire story, who was always laying down the law. One day his friend turned round on him.

"Here, Bill, that's not the way to argue."

"Argue. Who the h——l is arguing. I'm not arguing with yer. I'm telling yer."

Again let me repeat my advice to the young angler. "Don't think you know everything. You can always learn something from everyone."

> "He that knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool—shun him."

In the following, for convenience of reference, the various headings have the same numbers as the chapters in the book.

2. Fly-fishing *versus* Spinning.

I am more convinced than ever that it is the duty of anyone, who wants to be a good salmon fisherman, to try and become expert at every branch of the game. There are times and places when the fly will beat the

bait every time. On the other hand, there are occasions when those who stick to "fly only" will have to go without fish. Both are interesting, enjoyable and sporting methods of catching salmon, and I am afraid that those who say they despise bait-fishing know nothing about it. If we were to stick to "fly only" at Hampton Bishop, our bag would be very much smaller. On the other hand, when I was fishing Mr. Wood's beautiful water at Cairnton, it was a pleasure to be compelled to leave the spinning rod at home. On the Dee in May I should feel inclined to back the fly against the bait every time. In the same way at Hampton Bishop, after the middle of May, unless the water is very coloured, I seldom use anything but fly.

3. On Keeping a Fishing Diary.

Our Fishing Diary has now run into its seventh volume, and, although sometimes it is rather a trial to have to enter up all the details when one comes in after a long and perhaps successful day, I advise everyone to follow our example. It adds greatly to the interest of fishing, and is also of considerable practical value. Our experience shows that the two most important points are the condition (height, clearness, rising or falling) of the water, and the size of the fly or bait. Of course, it is no good laying down the law about anything to do with salmon. One can only indicate what are the probabilities. Anyhow, any stranger coming down to Hampton Bishop has only to look at the Diary to find out where there is the best chance *at any particular height of water* and at any time of the year. He can also see what flies or baits were most successful and what was *the size used.*

I previously gave a table (page 27) showing the number of fish caught with fly or bait in each month in the 10 years 1908-17. I now give the corresponding table for the 12 years 1918-29.

FISH CAUGHT IN EACH MONTH. 12 YEARS, 1918–29.

	Numbers.			Percentage caught in each month.			Percentage with fly.
	Bait.	Fly.	Total.	Bait.	Fly.	Total.	
January	2	–	2	·1	–	·1	nil
February	123	–	123	7·6	–	6·3	nil
March	517	23	540	31·9	7·1	27·8	4·3
April	550	27	577	34·0	8·3	29·6	4·8
May	287	76	363	17·7	23.6	18·7	20·9
June	59	55	114	3·6	17·0	5·9	48·2
July	10	30	40	·6	9·3	2·1	75·0
August	10	20	30	·6	6·2	1·5	66·3
September	23	41	64	1·4	12·7	3·3	64·1
October	40	51	91	2·5	15·8	4·7	54·9
Total	1,621	323	1944	100	100	100	16·6

A comparison of these two tables is rather interesting. April is the best month in both periods, but in the last 12 years March has been nearly as good as April, and February, 1918-29, is distinctly better than in the first period. It may be that the fish are running earlier than they used to do, or possibly the water conditions have been more favourable in the earlier months during the last 12 years.

The falling-off in September is most remarkable. The fish don't seem to stop in our water during the summer and autumn as they used to do. The September catch used to form 10 per cent. of the total. During the last 12 years it has dropped down to less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. This is the main reason why the percentage caught with fly has fallen from $30\frac{1}{2}$ to $16\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. However favourable the weather or water conditions may be, one can't catch fish either with fly or bait if they are not there to be caught.

In one point both tables agree. After May the fly will usually beat the bait until October, namely, when the water gets colder. I think there is little doubt that temperature has a good deal to do with the question of fly or bait. As the water gets warmer the fish tend to lie in the faster water, and are more ready to come to the surface. In the early spring, when the water is cold, they are not as likely to rise to a fly when they are lying in sluggish pools 8 to 12 feet deep. This statement is, of course, based mainly on our experience at Hampton Bishop, which is the only water I know really well. Let me make it quite clear. I have no wish to dogmatize, either now or later, about other beats in the Wye or about other rivers. It takes nearly a lifetime to "learn" one beat on one river.

As a matter of interest in this connection I give below the average monthly temperature at Hampton Bishop for the 20 years, 1908-27, and also the maximum and minimum record in each month. The temperature is usually taken about 9 o'clock each morning where the water is about 4 feet deep and rather slow running. We have occasionally recorded higher temperatures in the afternoon. In hot weather during the summer the temperature will sometimes rise 3 or 4 degrees during the day.

TEMPERATURE.

	Average	Maximum	Minimum
February	40.5	49	32
March	42.3	51	34
April	47.4	58	38½
May	55.6	69	45
June	61.2	73	51
July	63.2	74½	52½
August	61.6	72	52½
September	56.9	72	47
October	51.9	61	38

These figures show that the Wye is distinctly a

"warm" river. It is astonishing that the salmon can stand the heat when the water temperature gets over 70°, as it frequently does during the summer months. The highest we ever recorded was 77° one July afternoon.

4. Height of Water.

Our experience shows very clearly that *the height of the water is the main factor* for successful fishing, provided, of course, that the water is clear enough for the salmon to see your bait or fly. Some pools will fish well only in high water, whereas others are of no use until the river drops to a certain level. Of course, this will vary with the time of the year and the temperature of the water. I have caught fish in the Carrots Hole in April when the gauge showed well over 3 feet, but in February I should consider it waste of time to fish there until the river dropped to, say, 2 ft. 6 in.

We find that our best chance is when we have had a good flood and the river drops steadily day by day, but we don't expect much until she gets under 3 feet. Above that height the fish keep on the move, and don't settle down, and, when they are running, it is difficult to get hold of them. It would be folly to be too dogmatic about what salmon will or will not do, but there is no getting away from accurate records covering a period of over 20 years. Even in this case I admit one can't do much more than indicate what are the probabilities. Our great trouble is that we have practically only one really good holding pool, and when the river drops to a certain level the fish seem to disappear from the other pools—some of them, I am glad to say, into our fish larder.

As a matter of interest I give a table showing the numbers of fish "met" at each height during the last 12 years. The corresponding figures for the first period will be found on page 89.

HEIGHT OF WATER. FISH CAUGHT, RISEN OR TOUCHED, AND LOST. 12 YEARS, 1918–29.

Water below—	Numbers. Bait.	Fly.	Total.	Percentages. Bait.	Fly.	Total.
4 ft. 3 ins.	4	–	4	·2	–	·1
4 „ 0 „	22	–	22	1·1	–	·8
3 „ 9 „	31	–	31	1·5	–	1·2
3 „ 6 „	98	–	98	4·7	–	3·8
3 „ 3 „	119	2	121	5·6	·4	4·6
3 „ 0 „	237	13	250	11·2	2·6	9·6
2 „ 9 „	291	17	308	13·8	3·4	11·8
2 „ 6 „	353	53	406	16·7	10·6	15·5
2 „ 3 „	399	88	487	18·9	17·5	18·6
2 „ 0 „	264	106	370	12·4	21·1	14·1
1 „ 9 „	172	86	258	8·1	17·2	9·9
1 „ 6 „	80	61	141	3·8	12·2	5·4
1 „ 3 „	11	27	38	·5	5·4	1·5
1 „ 0 „	24	41	65	1·1	8·2	2·5
9 „	8	7	15	·4	1·4	·6
Total	2113	501	2614	100	100	100

Of which were landed,

Numbers	1622	322	1944
Percentages	76·8	64·3	74·4

On comparing the tables for the two periods I find that during the last 12 years we have been catching the fish in higher water than formerly. At first I thought it was due to the fact that latterly a larger proportion had been caught in the spring, but I find that it applies to the fly as well as the bait. Most of our fly-fishing is done after April. Perhaps the following figures will make this clearer.

PERCENTAGE OF FISH "MET" IN THE TWO PERIODS.

Water	Bait. 1908-17	1918-29	Fly. 1908-17	1918-29	Total. 1908-17	1918-29
Above 2 ft. 9 ins.	20·2	24·3	nil	3·0	13·0	20·1
1 ft. 9 ins. to 2 ft. 9 ins.	56·1	61·8	40·2	52·6	50·2	60·0
Below 1ft. 9ins.	23·7	13·9	59·8	44·4	36·8	19·9

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I find it rather difficult to account for this change. It may be that during recent years we have had clearer water when the river was high, or possibly we may have become more expert and have cleared out the taking fish before the water dropped to a lowish level. Possibly the level of the river-bed may have been gradually rising or, rather, the outlet in the pool in which the gauge is situated may have got contracted. This would tend to raise the level in the pool itself. This would mean that, when our gauge now records, say, 1 ft. 6 ins., the river is at the same level as it was when we formerly recorded, say, 1 ft. 3 ins. One thing is quite certain. We don't seem to get the river as low as we used to do. The lowest we recorded in the first 10 years was 2 ins. in 1911, and in the latter period 3½ ins. in 1929. Or, again, taking the averages of the lowest readings in each year in the two periods, I find that the figures are 7 ins. and 10 ins. respectively. Possibly the average rainfall has been rather higher in the latter period.

Anyhow, the figures show that during the last 12 years the best height for the bait is from 2 ft. 9 ins. down to 1 ft. 9 ins., as nearly 62 per cent. of the total have been " met " at that height. On the other hand, 68 per cent. of the fly incidents have occurred between 1 ft. 3 ins. and 2 ft. 3 ins. As a rule, during the fly season when the water gets below 1 ft. 9 ins., the fly comes into its own.

I must confess that in some ways I am a bad fisherman. I hate high water. There is too much luck and too much " chuck and chance it " about it. You don't catch the fish. They catch you. On the other hand, when the water drops to 2 ft. 6 ins. then I begin to " sit up and take notice," and at 2 ft. and below I really enjoy myself, for then it is real fishing. It is only those who have had a good deal of experience who are able to make good catches under those conditions. Dear old Crosfield used to pitch into me many a time about it, but I will own up that I am a bit spoilt.

Anyhow, on going through my records I find that during the last few years on 19 occasions I have landed five or more spring-fish in a day. On eight of these the river was under 2 ft., on nine between 2 ft. and 2 ft. 6 ins., and on only two occasions was the gauge over 2 ft. 6 ins. Further, our record catch of 17 fish, weighing 348¼ lbs., was made when the river was at 2 ft. 5 ins., and the best catch for a single rod at Hampton Bishop (namely, seven fish weighing 170½ lbs.) was when the gauge showed 2 ft. 0¼ ins. Mr. Pashley was the hero on this occasion. I take my hat off to him every time. He is a far better fisherman than I am, and, what is more, a very much better "trier." I am generally the first in every evening, but it may be that I am getting older, and that I can't fish as long as I used to do. It is just as well to know one's limitations. As dear old Sturdy once remarked to a friend of mine, "Edward my boy, it's no use getting old unless you get cunning."

Anyhow, the above records show that perhaps there is some excuse for my laziness or carelessness, or whatever one likes to call it, when the river is on the high side. Perhaps the main reason for my not trying to do my best in high water is because under those circumstances the fish don't settle down or take as well as they do when the water has dropped to a lower level. If you see a salmon move in high water the chances are, when you go to fish for it, that it is away up the river. In low water a fish generally is stopping where it shows. One is then fishing for an actual fish and not for a problematical one. Also, I can't fish as well with the heavier leads and baits, which are necessary in high water. Still, there is the old French proverb, "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse."

5. Fly-Fishing.

I have very little to add to what I wrote previously about fly-fishing, for, unfortunately, I have had comparatively few opportunities of fishing with fly at Hampton Bishop during recent years. Somehow

or other the fish don't seem to stop with us as they used to do when the water gets low enough for fly.

I have, however, thanks to Mr. Arthur Wood's great kindness, done a certain amount of fly-fishing on the Dee at Cairnton. He is another fisherman to whom I take off my hat. What little conceit I may have had about my abilities with the fly-rod was soon knocked out of me on the several occasions when I went to fish on his delightful beat. I am not going to attempt to describe his methods, for I am ashamed to say that I never mastered them. There was, however, one thing I learnt, namely, the great advantage of greasing one's line. It saves an enormous amount of trouble when one has a longish line to pick up on the back-cast, for the line does not get drowned so much in the swirls and eddies, which are generally to be found on the edges of the streams, and where the fish often take one. It also helps to keep the fly "alive" in these eddies. I generally use Hardy's Cerolene for greasing the line, but one word of advice—don't grease the last yard of the line, and avoid touching the cast itself with greasy fingers. Of course, one does not want to grease one's line in the early spring, for then you want the fly to swim as deep as possible. Greasing the line has the effect of keeping the fly very near the surface.

Anothing thing, too, I have learnt. Most flies are far too heavily dressed, and more especially the wings. You want the wings to be as translucent as possible. Crosfield's flies were the most perfect ones I ever saw. They were very lightly dressed with open translucent wings and with small neat heads, which would "enter" the water well. I hate a fly with a clumsy head.

As a matter of interest I give a list of the flies which have been most successful at Hampton Bishop, together with the numbers of fish landed with each pattern.

Thunder & Lightning	137	Jock Scot	22
Lemon Grey	103	Delfur	21
Coiner	100	Clarice Hay	20
Silver Grey	99	Hutton's Butcher	19
Torrish	28	Fiery Brown	15

Fish have been caught with 33 other patterns, but I personally see no necessity for all this multiplicity of patterns. In the spring I really don't think that the actual pattern matters very much. The really important point is the "size." The pattern of fly which will catch the most fish is just the one "which is maist in the watter."

However, when it comes to summer fishing it is quite another question. I have not had enough experience of summer fishing to justify my writing anything about it, but I think that when the water gets low and clear, and also warmer, the actual pattern does matter more. Certainly in the autumn I have often caught salmon with a reddish fly after they have refused others. I believe that the mistake most of us make is in fishing far too big. From the little experience I have had I am convinced that one ought to use really tiny flies when the water is low, clear and warm. Mr. Wood's fly-box was an eye-opener to me.

As regards "striking" fish I should like to offer a word of advice to the novice. Don't do anything until you actually feel the fish, and then don't *strike*, but tighten hard. I like to pull hard for a moment to get the hook well home, but this applies especially to large hooks such as one has to use in the spring. It is better to lose a lightly hooked fish straight away, rather than to play it for several minutes and for it then to come "unstuck."

My friend Corbett gave me a very useful tip when playing a sulking fish. Get it on as short a line as possible and get opposite to it. Then suddenly throw the rod, as it were, on one side, so as to get another pull on it from a different angle. What happens is this. In the ordinary way the fish will set all its fins to balance against the angle of your pull. When you change that angle the fish, as it were, tumbles over, and then it has to set to work to create a new balance of resistance. Do this two or three times and you will soon take the steam out of it. What I like is the fish which jumps about and

kills itself. It is the slugs which take such a long time to get in if you don't take stern measures with them. When they have set themselves to balance against the angle of your pull, you are taking nothing out of them. It is just the other way about. You are pulling hard at them and are merely holding them up against the stream.

Another thing I learnt from Corbett. There is not the slightest doubt that the noise of a click-check can and does irritate a salmon. Therefore, a silent check is far better when you have a lively fish in a dangerous spot. On the other hand, it is a good thing to have a click to put into action to stir up a sulking fish. The great thing is to keep the fish on the move, and don't be afraid of pulling too hard, *provided you keep the point of your rod up.* More salmon are lost by soft than by hard play. The longer you have a fish on, the greater chance there is of the hook gradually cutting its way through. One can hardly hold a fish too hard if one keeps the point of the rod up. The heaviest strain on the fish and on the line is when one drops the rod point so as to bring all the play on to the butt. Ghillies, however, do 't like a silent check, and especially if you are fishing out of a boat, for it makes it difficult for them to know what the fish is doing.

All the talk about a minute to the pound is absolute nonsense provided the fish is not hooked foul. I should say that in an ordinary way 5 to 15 minutes ought to be sufficient time in which to tire out most fish, if you will only keep them on the move. I have timed many fish in Norway, and fish running up to 30 pounds and over, and very rarely has it taken more than 10 minutes. The heaviest salmon I ever landed (58½ lbs.) was gaffed 12 minutes after it was hooked. Of course, anything may happen with a foul-hooked fish.

Another word of advice to the novice. Don't try to get the fish up to the ghilly by reeling it in. It is better to draw it up to the bank by walking backwards, so as to avoid getting it on a *very short* line. If the

fish should make a sudden plunge at the last minute there is nothing to give way, and the result is a smash —possibly followed by bad language. In any case don't pitch into the ghilly. One has no right to curse a man who can't curse one back again. In any case he is certain to be trying his best, and you will only make him more nervous for subsequent efforts. The great thing is to make it as easy as possible for him. It is your duty to bring the fish in to him, so that he can gaff it easily.

There is also another point. Sometimes a heavy fish will go right down to the bottom of a very deep pool, where you have very little power over it. You can't "reel" it up. The only way is to "pump" it up. Draw it up by walking back a few yards, and then walk forward, reeling in as you go. Then walk back again, and go on repeating this until you get it up to the surface. In any case always keep your rod-point up. Then there is very little chance of a smash. Very few rods can pull 2 pounds, so long as you keep the point up. If you want to get a really heavy strain on a fish (to give it the butt) drop your rod-point. The nearer the rod comes to the horizontal the greater the strain on the fish. Naturally, if you let it drop so low that the rod forms a straight line pointing at the fish, you are actually playing it with a hand-line, and that is the way to get broken. Again I say—*keep your rod-point up.*

One word more, and then I have finished my advice to the novice. Don't be too hard on a salmon which is splashing about on the top of the water, but try and get a horizontal pull with the rod-point near the surface of the water. In most cases this will quieten it down. No one would like to have a line hooked in his nose, which was pulling him *down* into the water. In the same way a salmon must resent what to it must seem an attempt to pull it *up* out of its natural element. Always keep a steady strain on the fish, and don't let the line go slack. I have landed many a salmon out of whose mouth the hook has dropped as soon as it was gaffed.

6. Minnow Fishing.

I still use one of Hardy's 12 ft. Murdoch split-cane spinning rods. I have had one of these rods for over 20 years, and it is still as good as new, although it has had some very hard work. I know that of recent years there has been a tendency to use much shorter rods for salmon fishing. This may be all right for boat fishing, but when one has to fish off the bank a longish rod has many advantages. Not the least is the fact that it enables one to clear bushes, reeds, etc., when winding in. I admit that one can cast as far as is wise with a much shorter rod, and possibly they are less tiring. But, although I am getting old, I find that, after a few days practice, what some would call a long rod is not too tiring.

As regards reels I admit that the best reel is the Nottingham, and especially so in its most perfect form—the Coxon Aerial. I myself now use the Rolo reel. There are now many excellent mechanically controlled reels on the market, but I find that with the Rolo I have perfect control over the length of the cast. It can be fished as a free running Nottingham reel, or as a brake-controlled reel, or one can set it so that one does not need to use the brake-trigger at all. Anyhow, I find it very easy to teach a novice how to cast with this reel.

I always fish it as an absolutely free-running reel, and check it with the break-trigger. I hate the least check or break on a reel when I am winding in, for it interferes with one's delicacy of touch. I generally fish with my rod-point directed to the point where the line enters the water. To get extra delicacy of touch I fish with the line just touching the point of the left forefinger, which acts as a sort of antenna. I don't want to swank, but in this way I can feel the least touch on the line, say from a floating twig or leaf, and usually I have very little difficulty in distinguishing the touch of a fish from the bottom. Anyhow, out of the last 1,000 fish I have met with bait, 861 have been hooked, but not all have been landed.

I can certainly cast further with the Rolo than I can with most reels, but I own up that I am not a long caster. Perhaps this is in some ways more of an advantage than otherwise. There are undoubtedly one or two casts on our water which I can't fish properly, and I don't try to fish them. I know, or I hope I know, my limitations. In some ways it may be a disadvantage to be able to throw a very long line, either with fly or bait. I am sure the shorter the cast the better, provided it is long enough to cover the fish effectively. This is a point I often discussed with Crosfield, and more particularly with reference to a mutual friend, who was a beautiful caster, but whose percentages of losses or of failures to hook, were more than they ought to have been. We both came to the conclusion that it was because he habitually threw too long a line. It is most essential in bait-fishing that one should be in absolute touch with one's bait. Then you have a much better chance of hooking your fish. This applies also to fly-fishing. One of the greatest mistakes made by beginners is throwing an unnecessarily long line.

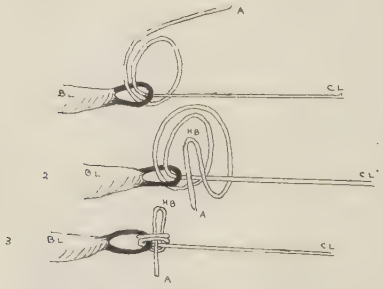
I have lately taken to using a white spinning line, or rather an undyed one. This suggestion I owe to Corbett. There are two great advantages about this. I watch my line where it touches the water as a cat does a mouse, and I find the white line much easier to see than the ordinary dark green line. I absolutely detest a black line. I should also point out that a white line must be less visible to the fish, as it would generally have the sky as a background, though I don't think this matters much. The salmon is not a very shy fish. The other advantage is that silk in the undyed state is much stronger, for most dye-stuffs tend to weaken the silk. I get these lines from Mr. Herbert Hatton, of Hereford. They are only slightly dressed, and they are quite the strongest lines I have come across.

As regards the bait cast I now use one of Hatton's boat-shaped leads with a ring at the upper end and a double swivel below. To this is attached a 15 inch

twisted-gut collar, on which I place one or two *bent* Jardine leads, according to the depth of the pool or the strength of the current. The weight of the lead is one of the most important points in connection with successful bait-fishing. I may use three different weights of lead in different parts of the same pool. Only experience can tell one what is the best weight to use. With these leads I am never troubled with the line twisting or snarling.

There is another swivel at the bottom of the gut collar and then follows three or four feet of single wire, and then comes the bait with another swivel at the head of the mount. One does get a very occasional breakage owing to the wire twisting back and snapping, but if one wants to be on the safe side it is better to have another swivel half way down the wire. This tip I owe to Pashley.

Corbett also gave me another tip, namely as to the best knot for fastening the line on to the cast. The



THE ANCHOR BEND.

CL=Casting line. A=End of line.
BL=Boat-shaped lead.

1. Pass the end of the line A upwards twice through the ring at the end of the lead to form two open loops.
2. Bring end A round and *under* CL, and form a half-bend HB.
3. Pass HB through the two open loops, and draw these tight by pulling CL.

knot is always the weakest link in one's spinning gear. He calls it the "anchor bend." The attached sketch will, I hope, make it quite clear how the knot is tied. One advantage of this knot is that it can be undone in a second by pulling the end marked A in the sketch. Don't pull the knot too tight. The fish or the bottom will do that for you. It is when a knot is drawn very tight that it is most likely to break. Another tip—which I think I got from the *Fishing Gazette*—always wet the line, either in your mouth or otherwise, before tying the knot. A knot which is tied *dry* will always swell up in the water and become tighter still, and therefore weaker. Another word of advice to the novice, and perhaps also to others with some experience. Always be on the look-out for tips or hints about fishing tackle or about methods of fishing.

Now as to mounts. Formerly I used a single triangle with a bead as described in the book. Acting on the advice of both Crosfield and Pashley I now use two triangles, the upper one replacing the bead. The only exception I make is when the water is low and clear, and when a 2 in. or 1¾ in. Devon is advisable. The double triangle may make the bait look a size larger, and in these conditions perhaps the single triangle is better. As a matter of fact, I seldom use a Devon so small as 1¾ in., for probably then the fly would be the best bait.

I said before that with *fresh-run* fish the actual pattern of bait did not seem to matter so much, or, at any rate, not in our water. The size is, I think, far more important. When the water gets low and the fish a bit stale and pernickety it is another question. Anyhow, as a matter of interest I give the numbers of salmon caught on each bait during the last 12 years.

PHANTOMS—178.

Wadham's Gudgeon	71	Leather Bait	7
Brown and Gold	38	Wadham's Loach	3
Blue and Silver	25	Sundries	10
Gudgeon	24		

DEVONS—1193.

Brown and Silver	397	Silver	23
Brown and Gold	202	Silver Sp.	21
Blue and Silver	174	Blue and Gold	8
Brown and Silver Sp.	128	Gold Sp.	5
Brown and Gold Sp.	85	Loach	5
Red and Gold	82	Sundries	36
Gold	27		

N.B.—Sp. stands for Wadham's Spangaloids.

REFLET	59	SPOON	9

NATURAL BAITS—133.

Prawn	66	Sprat	1
Gudgeon	56	Worm	1
Golden Sprat	9		

I have lately taken to using wooden Devons—a tip given me by Mr. Wyndham Smith. They are very useful when fishing a pool with a slackish stream and a very rough bottom, and they have the advantage of being very cheap. Miss Wheelhouse, Church Street, Kensington, London, supplies them at 1/- each, without mounts. For ordinary work I find there is nothing to beat Hatton's Devons. I catch most of my fish with his Brown and Silver. Wadham's Spangaloids are also very good, and they are rather lighter than Hatton's Devons. Of course, light baits are more difficult to cast, but they fish far better than the old-fashioned heavy Devon, and they don't catch in the bottom so much.

As a rule, I don't think the actual pattern matters very much, but when the water is low and clear, I like a small Brown and Gold Devon, and the dirtier and shabbier it is the better. I have also found a Red and Gold very effective as a change. I have caught many a fish with it which has refused other baits. We call it the Brass Hat or the Staff Officer. This bait was first suggested to me by Crosfield.

I practically never use natural baits. They are a nuisance to mount, and I don't find they are any more effective than artificials. The heaviest salmon I ever

caught was tempted by one of Wadham's artificial gudgeons. All the same, I admit that a very small natural gudgeon or colley will sometimes tempt a stale fish.

I am often asked, "how fast ought one to reel in?" It is impossible to answer this question on paper. Everything depends on the depth of the pool, on the force of the current, and on the weight of one's leads or bait. In some cases one has to keep on reeling in all the time, and sometimes fairly fast, in order to keep one's bait from catching in the bottom. In other pools one may have to reel in very slowly or not at all, and in some cases one may have to let out line slowly in order to keep the bait down. One can always raise the level of the bait, say to avoid a rock or boulder, by reeling in fast for say half a dozen turns of the reel. As a matter of fact, one can only learn by experience how fast one should reel in. It is a comparatively simple matter to learn how to cast. The next difficulty is to be able to regulate the length of one's cast. The greatest difficulty is to know how to manipulate one's bait when it is in the water. This also applies to fly-fishing.

7. Prawn Fishing.

As far as the Wye is concerned I have very little to add to what I wrote previously about prawn-fishing, for I have almost given it up in our water. I have not found it a very deadly bait and, when the water is in good order, I find that I can catch fish as well, or even better, with a Devon or phantom. At Hampton Bishop we regard the prawn as a last resort. Anyhow, during the last six years I have landed 286 salmon at Hampton Bishop, and of these only 9 were caught with prawn.

I have, however, done a good deal of prawn-fishing in Norway, and I have found it a great advantage to "sow up" the prawn with soft red silk after it is needled. In this way one can avoid tying in any of the whiskers and feelers, and the prawn will stand much more casting. I think that silk is better than

fine copper wire, for it does not cut through the shelly covering of the segments. This suggestion I owe to Crosfield. I use the ordinary mount with two triangles, or with one triangle at the end and a double (or spiked double) above. I wrap a few turns of lead wire round the upper triangle to keep the prawn on an even keel. I tie a small gut loop at the top of the tail triangle, which is slipped over the point of the needle, and I like to get the tail triangle well hidden in the whiskers. The upper triangle is then fixed in the middle of the prawn and the gut mount is wound round the twists at the top of the needle. I am most careful in arranging all the feelers, whiskers, etc., so that they stand out well and hide the hooks. One or two turns of thin copper wire round the middle of the prawn and a few turns round the tail, and the tackle is ready for use. I have found this tackle very effective. For the spinning prawn it is not necessary to take all this trouble, but spinning a prawn is not "prawn fishing."

8. Proportion of Losses, etc.

The question was asked recently, I think in the *Fishing Gazette*, as to what proportion of fish one ought to land out of one's "offers," and how many losses should be reasonable. It is rather difficult to define what constitutes a loss. One may get a "pull" at the bait or fly, but one would hardly call that a loss. One might put it another. way How are you going to define a "hooked" fish? Is it one that is on for five seconds; for half a minute; or what? I can only give my own experience, and I generally try not to cheat myself. If I have once had a fairly good hold of a salmon, and if I feel that I have really jammed the hook home, and if, after that, it comes unstuck, I call it a "loss." Here are my records, for whatever they are worth.

	Bait.	Fly.
Risen or touched	100·0	100·0
Did not take hold	13·9	34·0
Actually hooked	86·1	66·0

Broken	3·1	3·2
Lost	14·6	10·6
Landed	68·4	52·2
	86·1	66·0

Some of the " breaks " were due to hooks breaking, which was not my fault, but, as regards the others, I feel I ought to kick myself. It is generally one's own fault if one gets broken. Anyhow, it comes to this, that I land about 68 per cent. of my " offers " at the bait, and 52 per cent. with the fly ; but of fish actually hooked I land about 80 per cent. in each case. Of course there are a good many offers at the bait about which one knows nothing, for one can't see what is taking place under water. Also some of the " knocks " one gets are at the lead. I have actually seen a salmon take hold of the lead as I was winding in. Still I should not advise anyone to attach a hook to the lead on the chance of hooking an occasional salmon. It would probably result in getting caught in the bottom in a very expensive way. Anyhow, I am not satisfied with my percentage of landings as compared to the numbers of offers I get.

9. Average Weights, etc.

As a matter of interest I give the average weight of the fish caught in each month during the last 22 years, and also the percentage of Hen-fish.

	Av. Wt. lbs.	Percentage of females.
February	20·4	83·2
March	20·3	78·1
April	19·7	76·5
May	16·1	77·3
June	12·2	75·7
July	11·7	63·6
August	10·9	72·7
September	12·0	51·9
October	12·8	52·8
Total	17·5	74·5

During the same period we have caught 80 salmon of 30 lbs. or over ; 52, 30 to 35 lbs. ; 16, 35 to 40 lbs. ; and 12, 40 lbs. and over. The heaviest fish weighed 47½ lbs. and all the 40 pounders were cocks. It is not often one catches a hen-fish weighing over 30 pounds, for the simple reason that very few of them remain for more than three years in the sea without returning to spawn. Most of the " portmanteau " class are males which have stopped for four years feeding in salt water before their first return to the river to reproduce their species.

10. Conclusion.

This completes all the additions I have to make to the little book. I could have added a good deal more, but this appendix is already far too long. I should make it clear that I have been writing for the novice and not for the expert, for I myself have still a lot to learn. I can only hope that some beginners may be able to pick up a few hints and to benefit from my experience, which now extends over a greater number of years than I like to think about.

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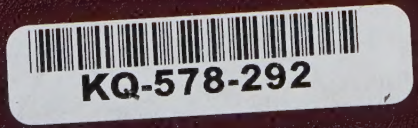
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